Al-Mīzān

An Exegesis of the Qur'an

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī

Translated by: Alexander Khaleeli

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In the Name of Allah,
the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;
the Beneficent, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgment;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we beseech
for help;
Guide us in the straight path;
The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed
favors,not of those against whom Thou art
wrathful, nor of those who are astray.

•

O' Allah! send Your blessings to the head of
Your messengers and the last of
Your prophets,
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send Your blessings to all Your
prophets and envoys.

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Arabic Transliteration Key

Arabic Letters	Transliteration	Arabic Letters	Transliteration
ا	ā	ع	ʿ
ب	b	غ	gh
ت	t	ف	f
ث	th	ق	q
ج	j	ك	k
ح	ḥ	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	dh	ه	h
ر	r	و	w/ū
ز	z	ى	y/ī
س	s	ء	ʾ
ش	sh	ة	-
ص	ṣ	ـَ	a
ض	ḍ	ـَ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u
ظ	ẓ		

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Publisher's Note

In an effort to make the text more accessible to English-speaking readers, the editors have chosen to use English names for the prophets and figures (as listed below but not limited to) and to use Anglicized terms that now appear in English dictionaries.

Ādam	Adam	Mūsā	Moses
Dāwūd	David	Sulaymān	Solomon
Hārūn	Aaron	Shuʿayb	Jethro
Ibrāhīm	Abraham	Yaʿqūb	Jacob
ʿĪsā	Jesus	ʾAyyūb	Job
Isḥāq	Isaac	Yūshaʿ	Joshua
Ismāʿīl	Ishmael	Yūsuf	Joseph
Jibrāʾīl	Gabriel	Zakariyyā	Zachariah
Maryam	Mary	ʿUzayr	Ezra

Arabic terms and names have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*).

For ease of reading, glyphs and traditional honorifics such as "peace be upon him" or (s.a.w.) which are commonly used as a gesture of respect after the name of the Prophet Muhammad, the Imāms, or other sacred figures have been omitted from this text. No disrespect is intended, and may God's peace and blessings be upon them all!

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Foreword

Sūrah al-Tawba ('Repentance')—also known as Sūrah al-Barā'a ('Repudiation')—can seem intimidating. Largely, it addresses the conflict between the Muslims and their opponents, who were intent on eradicating them; these opponents included both declared enemies as well as a fifth column among the Muslim ranks. This is the only chapter not to begin with 'in the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful'; some say that this is because of the harsh subject matter, although narrations also indicate that this is merely because it continues the previous chapter. In either case, the grim discussions of warfare in this chapter have led the unscrupulous to cite verses from it out of context to present Islam as 'violent'.

Fortunately, 'Allāmah's historical contextualization of these verses allays the misconception that the Qur'an preaches violence. Additionally, the historical details in the exegesis greatly assist the reader in constructing a mental image of the events underlying these verses, especially the campaigns at Tabūk and Ḥunayn. For instance, in the narrations on the exegesis of 9:92, which speaks of those who were genuinely unable to join the battles, one man laments:

> Is there not a young man with a pair of shoes / upon which to mount me (*yaḥmilunī*), for I am an old man on a journey?

For many, the circumstances at Tabūk were indeed dire, as another narration says:

> There were ten Muslims who left with a camel that they shared between themselves, so that each of them would ride on its back for an hour and then get down and allow someone else to sit upon it. Their provisions consisted of barley flour with bran, worm-eaten dates, and rancid oil. When one of them was pressed by hunger, he would put a date in his mouth and chew on it to obtain its taste, then he would take it out and give it to his compatriot who would suck some of the moisture out of it, and they would pass it around until nothing remained of that date except its seed.

Like in the other volumes of his exegesis, 'Allāmah integrates historical, philosophical, and theological discussions. The topic of warfare naturally leads to others, both in the verses and in the exegesis. One is the subject of treaties, which features in the exegesis of 9:4-9:16 and also in a separate section after

the narrations. In these sections, ʿAllāmah presents an overview of treaties and alliances according to pre-Islamic custom as well as in Islamic thought. He then offers a more abstract, sociological discussion of treaties, concluding that a religiously-minded society, not motivated by purely material considerations, is more likely to observe the sanctity of a treaty. Another topic that arises is *sakīna*, or 'divine composure', which settles in the hearts of the faithful during battle. But what is this *sakīna*, did everyone experience it, and was it embodied by invisible hosts? And how is it—as ʿAllāmah asserts—that *sakīna* 'prevents a person from committing any sins whatsoever'? Then, there is the ultimate question of free will: if God acts through human hands during a battle, then who is responsible for what? On this topic, ʿAllāmah addresses the seeming tension between God as the ultimate Cause and human free will, concluding that 'human actions are related both to their immediate causes... and to their ultimate cause (God) in a way that does not infringe upon God's divinity.'

In addition to military concerns, financial matters also feature in this chapter. Hoarding, stinginess, and financial abuse among the clerical classes are condemned in 9:34. ʿAllāmah builds on this by considering the development of currency—from bartering, to precious metals—to ratified currencies—and the impact of hoarding in the twentieth century. While he does not take a negative view of economic development—instead, he cites a tradition from Imām al-Bāqir saying, 'He created [gold and silver] for the benefit of His creatures, that they might organise their affairs and meet their needs with them'—he observes:

In fact, between the two World Wars of the twentieth century, we saw the effects of some currencies losing their value entirely, such as the Ruble in Tsarist Russia or the Mark in Germany. Both of these countries were plunged into deep crises as a result of economic stagnation and inflation that resulted from the devaluing of their currencies. Economic calamities such as this can also be caused by people hoarding wealth and impeding the free flow of currency amongst the population.

Hence, it is clear that hoarding money is economically equivalent to devaluing commodities, as it hoarding money is rendered inert and unproductive.

This exemplifies how ʿAllāmah handles socioeconomic considerations throughout his exegesis.

While this exegesis can be read for its own sake, it also, in practices, offers different views from those presented in some nineteenth and twentieth century orientalist and post-orientalist writings on Islam. For instance, when discussing the Islamic calendar, ʿAllāmah provides textual and historical reasons

for why intercalation (*nasīʾ*) was deemed an increase in unfaith (9:37). These views provide a counterpoint to the idea, popular in some circles, that the Prophet merely changed the calendar to assert a distinct Muslim identity. A discussion on the Bedouins (9:97 ff) lays to rest the stereotype that Islam is essentially nomadic. And, of course, ʿAllāmah's deep scrutiny of historical narrations—including conflicting views, such as whether ʿAlī or Abū Bakr was sent to deliver a prohibition on performing the pilgrimage sky-clad—offers a comprehensive view of Islamic history and how narratives of Islamic history have been constructive.

All in all, this volume of exegesis once again showcases ʿAllāmah's signature style of interweaving detailed, pinpointed historical discussions with broader philosophical, theological, and sociological ruminations. Although largely focused on military and financial concerns, it nonetheless provides deep reflections on many aspects of the human condition, under a theological lens.

Amina Inloes (Editor)
20 March 2023
London, UK

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Chapter 9

Sūrah al-Tawba

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Verses 1 to 16

These verses mark the beginning of a chapter called Sūrah al-Tawba ('Repentance') or Sūrah al-Barā'a ('Repudiation'). However, commentators on the Qur'an have differed as to whether this actually marks the beginning of a new chapter, or whether this is a continuation of Sūrah al-Anfāl. Their disagreement stems from the disagreement of the Companions (*ṣaḥāba*) and the Successors (*tābiʿūn*) on the same question. The traditions of the Imāms appear similarly dissonant. However, based on the construction of their sayings, it seems most likely that they held these verses to be a continuation of Sūrah al-Anfāl.

When examining the themes and content of the verses in this chapter, it soon becomes apparent to the reader that they do not have a single purpose or goal in the same way that the verses of other chapters do. Other chapters of the Qur'an usually have an overarching idea that is introduced by their opening verses and summarized again in their concluding ones. Sūrah al-Tawba begins with a proclamation repudiating the idolaters. It also contains verses about fighting the idolaters and fighting the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*). A large portion of it also discusses the threat posed by the hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*). Meanwhile, there are verses encouraging the Prophet's followers to go forth and fight and rebuking those who hang back, and others that address the question of allying with the disbelievers or paying the *zakāt* (alms tax). However, the vast majority of the verses in this chapter are concerned with fighting the disbelievers and dealing with the hypocrites in the midst of the Muslims.

In any case, this discussion does not prove especially useful when it comes to interpreting the verses themselves, although it may be relevant to discussions of their legal relevance. However, this is beyond the scope of the present work.

بَرَاءَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١﴾

(9:1) ***A repudiation by Allah and His Messenger to the polytheists with whom you had made a treaty.***

Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says:

> 'The original meaning of the words *al-bar'*, *al-barā'*, and *al-tabarrī* (cognates of *barā'a* or "repudiation") is to recoil from something which you detest being close to. That is why the Arabs say *bari'tu min al-maraḍ* ("I became free from illness"), or *bar'itu min fulān* ("I disassociated from so-and-so"), *tabarra'tū* ("I disclaim association from..." or "I declare myself innocent of..."), and the same for *abra'tuhu* and *barra'tuhu* (both signifying "I absolve him of guilt for..."). A man likewise is said to be *barī'* or a people *barī'ūn* ("innocent"). God says: *A repudiation by Allah and His Messenger....*'

This verse serves as a title or heading for the passage that follows immediately after it, insofar as it provides a succinct summary of its contents. This is similar to the role played by the opening verses of the other stand-alone chapters of the Qur'an, in which one or two of the verses that occur at their beginning provide a summation of the topic that the remainder of the verses have been revealed in order to explain.

This verse is addressed to either the faithful alone or to both the Prophet and the faithful together, based on the fact that God uses the second-person plural when He says *ilā alladhīna ʿāhadtum* ('with whom you (pl.) had made a treaty'). This title verse invokes God, who is the source of this proclamation; the Prophet, who is its conveyor; and the idolaters who are the subjects of it, as they are the ones being repudiated by it. It is addressed to the Prophet and the faithful so that they will convey its message to all of the idolaters who were absent when it was revealed. This method of delivering proclamations and decrees whose message is intended for the general population also reflects the greatness and tremendousness of the one issuing them.

The passage delivers a decree that commands the faithful to repudiate the idolaters. However, this decree is not purely legislative, as had it been so, the Prophet would not have been made a partner in the issuance of the repudiation—*by Allah and His Messenger*—as the Qur'an conventionally assigns anything purely legislative to God alone, as per the verse *and none shares with Him in His ruling* (18:26). Equally, no rule is attributed to the Prophet alone unless it falls within the domain of rulership and governance or the settling of disputes.

The verse announces the removal of protection from the idolaters with whom the Muslims had made a treaty. This treaty was not nullified at random or without reasonable justification, as God will explain a few verses below that the Muslims could not rely on the treaty they had made with the idolaters,

as most of the latter were transgressors who did not respect its substance and had already broken its provisions in action. God had permitted the Muslims to repudiate such a treaty in the earlier verse: *And if you fear treachery from a people, break off with them in a like manner. Surely Allah does not like the treacherous* (8:58). God allowed the Muslims to break off a treaty if they feared the other side would betray them. However, God also said that He would only approve such a course of action on the condition that the Muslims conveyed this break to the other side, lest they be taken unawares, which would itself be an act of treachery (*khiyāna*), which is forbidden in Islam.

Moreover, if this treaty had been repudiated without the idolaters having done anything to justify such an action, the Qur'an would not have drawn a distinction between those of them who upheld their side of the treaty and those who did not, for God makes the exception in the subsequent verse: *barring the polytheists with whom you have made a treaty, and who did not violate any with you, nor backed anyone against you. So fulfil the treaty with them until its term. Indeed Allah loves the Godwary* (9:4).

In addition to this, God did not approve of the Muslims breaking their treaty with those idolaters who had violated its terms without granting them a period of grace in which they could consider their position and decide what course of action they wanted to take. This is once again so that they would not be taken unawares.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is that the aforementioned treaty is no longer valid, and security is no longer guaranteed to those idolaters who made a treaty with the Muslims only for the majority of them to violate its terms (and for those who did not violate it thus far, there is little expectation that they will adhere to it, uphold their oaths, and avoid doing harm to or plotting against the Muslims either).

فَسِيحُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ ۙ
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْزِي الْكَافِرِينَ ۝٢

(9:2) ***Travel in the land for four months, but know that you cannot thwart Allah, and that Allah shall disgrace the faithless.***

The verb *siyāḥa* (travel) means to journey and move upon the earth, which is why one describes constantly flowing water as *sā'iḥ* (or 'flowing,' which is the active participle of the verb *sīḥū* used in the verse).

God's decree to the idolaters that they should travel the land for four

months is not a literal command, as it signifies that they have been given a grace period of four months in which they will be safe from aggression, left alone, and not harmed by anyone. This is so that they can choose whatever course of action seems most beneficial to themselves out of surviving or perishing. When God tells them, *know that you cannot thwart Allah*, this is a hint that it is in their best interests to reject polytheism and accept the religion of monotheism and an admonition not to cast themselves into destruction through their own arrogance or invite God to humiliate them.

Note how this verse addresses the idolaters directly—shifting from speaking about them in the third person to speaking to them in the second person—because, by addressing them directly, the Qur'an conveys decisiveness and resolution to the Muslims' adversaries, demonstrates that they have power and superiority over them, and simultaneously disparages these enemies' own strength and ability to retaliate.

Commentators have offered differing views about which four months the *four months* mentioned in the repudiation refer to. The context of the verse, as well as the fact that this is presented as a period of grace following an official proclamation, to allow the idolaters time to reflect on their situation and choose whichever they deem more beneficial for themselves between life and death, suggests the following: The *four months* begin on the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage (*Yawm al-Ḥajj al-Akbar*), which God refers to in subsequent verses, as the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage was the day on which the proclamation was delivered. Therefore, insofar as these four months are meant to serve as a period of grace to leave the idolaters without any excuse, it makes the most sense that they should begin on the day that the proclamation was delivered.

Now, historians are unanimously agreed that these verses were revealed in the year 9 A.H. Supposing that the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage is the day on which the sacrificial animals are slaughtered (*yawm al-naḥr*), which is the 10th of Dhū l-Ḥijja, this would mean that these four months consist of the last twenty days of Dhū l-Ḥijja, plus Muḥarram, Ṣafar, Rabīʿ al-Awwal, and the first ten days of Rabīʿ al-Thānī.

Other commentators have argued that these four months begin on the 20th of Dhū al-Qaʿda—as this is the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage according to them—in which case, the four months are the last ten days of Dhū al-Qaʿda, Dhū al-Ḥijja, Muḥarram, Ṣafar, and twenty days from Rabīʿ al-Awwal. We will discuss the problems presented by this interpretation below.

Still other commentators have argued that these verses were revealed on

the 1st of Shawwāl in the year 9 A.H., in which case the four months are Shawwāl, Dhū al-Qaʿda, Dhū al-Ḥijja, and Muḥarram. This means that the four months referenced in the verse correspond to the Sacred Months (*al-Ashhur al-Ḥurum*) of the pre-Islamic Arabic calendar. They have drawn this conclusion on the basis of their reading of the subsequent verse: *Then, when the sacred months have passed, kill the polytheists* (9:5), which they say refers to the Sacred Months of the pre-Islamic Arabic calendar, which are Dhū al-Qaʿda, Dhū al-Ḥijja, and Muḥarram, in which all fighting and warfare was forbidden. Therefore, the conclusion of the pre-Islamic Sacred Months coincides with the end of the four-month grace period mentioned in this verse. However, this reading is utterly incorrect as it is not supported by the context of these verses, as should be evident.

وَأَذَانٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ بَرِيءٌ مِنَ
الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۙ وَرَسُولُهُ ۚ فَإِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوا
أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣﴾

(9:3) ***And an announcement from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage: that Allah and His Messenger repudiate the polytheists: If you repent that is better for you; but if you turn your backs know that you cannot thwart Allah, and give news to the faithless of a painful punishment.***

Adhān (announcement) means notification.

This verse is not merely a repetition of the first verse of the chapter—*A repudiation by Allah and His Messenger...* (9:1)—for although the two sentences convey the same meaning, which is the repudiation of the idolaters, they differ in their delivery. The previous verse is both a proclamation of repudiation and the delivery of this proclamation to the idolaters, as is clear from the phrase: *to the polytheists with whom you had made a treaty*. On the other hand, the present verse is addressed to the Muslim public, informing them of the repudiation of the idolaters by God and His Messenger, so that they can ready themselves and make the necessary preparations to fulfil God's commands regarding the idolaters once the sacred months have passed. This is evident from God saying: *an announcement... to the people*, and the fact that He follows this with the command: *Then, when the sacred months have passed, kill the polytheists wherever you find them...* (9:5).

But what is the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage (*Yawm al-Ḥajj al-Akbar*)? As we have already noted, commentators hold a variety of opinions:

Some argue that it is the day on which the animals are sacrificed in the year 9 A.H., because this was the last time the Muslims and idolaters were all gathered together, as the idolaters would not be permitted to perform the pilgrimage in subsequent years. This reading is supported by traditions narrated from the Prophet's Household and is also the most appropriate for the context of the proclamation of repudiation itself, because this was the day on which the Muslim and polytheist pilgrims would have been gathered together in Minā. This idea is found in traditions narrated via Sunnī collections, save for the fact that most of them associate the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage with the day on which the animals are slaughtered in any year. Hence, for them, this day occurs on each annual pilgrimage, even though there is no basis found for this naming convention in the traditions.

Another view is that this refers to the Day of ʿArafa, because it is the day on which pilgrims stop on the slopes of Mount ʿArafa (*wuqūf*), and this ritual is not part of the Lesser Pilgrimage or *ʿUmra* (hence the stopping on Mount ʿArafa is something that defines the Greater Pilgrimage and sets it apart). However, this is pure ratiocination without any evidence to support it or other means to verify it.

Others have said that the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage refers to the day following the day on which the animals are slaughtered, because it is on that day that the leader of the Muslims is supposed to deliver a sermon to the pilgrims. However, the weakness of this interpretation is self-evident.

Still others have suggested that it refers to all of the days of the Ḥajj pilgrimage, just as one might refer to 'the day' of the Camel (*yawm al-Jamal*), 'the day' of Ṣiffīn, or 'the day' of Buʿāth (in relation to these respective battles, even though these lasted more than a single day), when what is meant by 'day' is actually a period of time. Of course, this opinion does not rule out any of the previous opinions either, as it is compatible with all of them insofar as it says that all of those days are the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage. As for why this pilgrimage is known as 'the Greater Pilgrimage,' proponents of this view can turn to any of the opinions presented above, including the first, to provide an explanation.

However, a careful study of the context of the verse does not support this view. This is because there is a particular day of the pilgrimage season in which all of the pilgrims gather together and which, therefore, presents the perfect opportunity to deliver the proclamation of repudiation, such as the day of

slaughtering the sacrificial animals. The fact of such a day's existence means that merely hearing the phrase 'the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage' automatically calls that day to the audience's mind. At the same time, it precludes the possibility of it referring to any of the other days of the pilgrimage season in which the pilgrims are not thusly assembled.

Then, God shifts His attention (*iltifāt*) to the idolaters a second time and reminds them that they cannot thwart His will so that they will see the reality of their own situation clearly, just as He reminded them in the previous verse: *but know that you cannot thwart Allah, and that Allah shall disgrace the faithless* (9:2). However, in the present verse, God adds the phrase: *If you repent that is better for you*, which makes explicit what had been hinted at in the previous verse. This shows that when God reminds them that they cannot thwart His will, this is intended as an admonition to them and a wise piece of counsel, so that they will not cast themselves into perdition by deciding to remain idolaters and turning their backs to the religion of monotheism. Therefore, this verse expresses the same threat, advice, and admonition as the previous one, but it does so more clearly.

Next, God turns His attention to the Prophet and tells him to give news of a painful punishment to the disbelievers: *and give news to the faithless of a painful punishment*. The reason for the first shift (*iltifāt*) is that it is a continuation from the passage: *Travel in the land for four months...* (9:2). Then, the reason for the shift in the passage: *...and give news to the faithless...* (9:3) is because the message will not be delivered without the Prophet addressing its recipients directly.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوا
عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدًا فَأَتِمُّوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَىٰ مُدَّتِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤﴾

(9:4) ***Barring the polytheists with whom you have made a treaty, and who did not violate any with you, nor backed anyone against you. So fulfil the treaty with them until its term. Indeed Allah loves the Godwary.***

Here, God makes an exception for some of the idolaters, namely those idolaters who made a treaty and did not violate it directly or indirectly. They are exempt from this proclamation of repudiation and, therefore, it is obligatory for the Muslims to continue to uphold their treaty with them and fulfil it until its full term.

Note that God adds, *nor backed anyone against you* to *who did not violate any with you*. This shows that there are two ways in which the other idolaters violated their treaties, namely directly and indirectly. Direct violations of the treaty refer to acts such as killing Muslims, while indirect violations of the treaty refers to giving military support to the disbelievers against the Muslims, just as the idolaters of Mecca had armed the Banū Bakr tribe to fight against the Khuzāʿa, because the Banū Bakr tribe had an alliance with the Quraysh, while the Khuzāʿa were allies of the Prophet. Therefore, when the Banū Bakr attacked the Khuzāʿa and the Quraysh helped them, this was in violation of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyya which they had signed with the Prophet. This was one of the reasons for the Muslim conquest of Mecca in the year 8 A.H.

The phrase, *Indeed Allah loves the Godwary*, explains the rationale for why the Muslims are obliged to uphold their treaties with those idolaters who had not violated its terms. It does this by making upholding treaties a facet of Godwariness (*taqwā*) in general, which is itself something that the Qur'an repeatedly enjoins upon its audience. For example, in one verse, we read: *O you who have faith! Be maintainers, as witnesses for the sake of Allah, of justice, and ill feeling for a people should never lead you to be unfair. Be fair; that is nearer to Godwariness* (5:8), while in another, we read: *Ill feeling for a people should not lead you, because they barred you from the Holy Mosque, to transgress. Cooperate in piety and Godwariness, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression, and be wary of Allah* (5:2).

This also illustrates the problem with how some commentators have read this verse, namely that the meaning of *muttaqīn* (lit. the wary, translated as 'the Godwary') here is 'those who are wary of breaking a treaty without justification' (according to this reading, therefore, upholding treaties is not a facet of Godwariness in general). This is because, in Qur'anic parlance, *taqwā* refers to avoiding all things that God has prohibited. Therefore, if the term *muttaqīn* was being used here to signify the specific meaning suggested by these commentators (namely, being wary of breaking the treaty rather than being wary of God), there would need to be some contextual indicator to narrow its scope accordingly.

فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُوهُمْ
وَاحْصُرُوهُمْ وَاقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ ۚ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا
الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾

(9:5) ***Then, when the sacred months have passed, kill the polytheists wherever you find them, capture them and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every ambush.***

The root meaning of *insilākh* (to pass) is 'to skin a sheep' (that is, to remove its hide). The *insilākh* of a month is a figurative way of saying that it has elapsed. The term *ḥasr* (besiege) means to prevent them from leaving a location. *Marṣad* (ambush) is a noun of place (*ism makān*) derived from the root *r-ṣ-d* (to observe or lie in wait), in the sense of waiting for someone while concealed.

Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says:

> '*Raṣad* means to lie in wait for someone. One says *raṣada lahu* (he lay in wait for him), *taraṣadda* (he lay in wait), and *arṣadtuhu* (I made ready for him). God says: *and for the purpose of ambush* (irṣādan) *by those who have fought Allah and His Messenger before* (5:107). And He says, *Indeed your Lord is in ambush* (mirṣād) (89:14), to show that there is no place of refuge or escape from Him. The active participles of *raṣd* are *rāsid* for an individual and *rāṣidīn* for a group, but the passive participle is *marṣūd* for both an individual and a group. When God says, *Then He dispatches a sentinel* (raṣad) *before and behind him*, this could refer to any of the above meanings. A *marṣad* is a place in which one lies in wait.'

The meaning of 'the sacred months' (*al-ashur al-ḥurum*) are the months in which God told the idolaters to travel freely in the verse: *Travel in the land for four months* (9:2). This was given as a grace period in which they would not be harassed because of their status. As for the Sacred Months of the pre-Islamic calendar, namely Dhū al-Qaʿda, Dhū al-Ḥijja, and Muḥarram, these do not align with the proclamation of repudiation that was delivered on the day of the slaughter of the sacrificial animals on 10th Dhū al-Ḥijja that year, as we have already explained above.

The reason why God refers to these months with the definite article (*the sacred months*) is because they have already been mentioned above. Therefore, the meaning of this passage is '*Then, when the sacred months*, which We have mentioned above and which We have set aside for the idolaters so that no one will aggress against them therein, *have passed,* then you may *kill the polytheists*...'

Based on this, it is evident why the phrase *Then, when the sacred months have passed...* cannot be read as referring to the passing of Dhū al-Qaʿda, Dhū

al-Ḥijja, and Muḥarram, per the sacred months of the calendar of the pre-Islamic Arabs. This is the case whether this is meant in the sense that the end of these three months aligns exactly with the end of the four-month grace period granted in the proclamation or that the end of the sacred months marks the end of the grace period, even if the two do not align exactly. This is because, even if the phrase *al-ashhur al-ḥurum* (the sacred months) is commonly understood as a reference to the months of Rajab, Dhū al-Qaʿda, Dhū al-Ḥijja, and Muḥarram, there is nothing in the context to support such an interpretation in the case of this verse.

...kill the polytheists wherever you find them: This command signifies that once this grace period has ended, the repudiation becomes effective, and the idolaters no longer enjoy any guarantee of protection, so there is nothing to prevent any attack against them. The phrase *ḥaythu wajadtumūhim* (wherever you find them) shows that this rule is universal in scope. Therefore, there is no restriction on killing them, no matter in what circumstances they are encountered, even if it is during a sacred month, based on the fact that the preposition *ḥayth* (where/when) encompasses both time and place. Therefore, it is obligatory on all Muslims, whoever they are, to slay the idolaters whenever and wherever they are able to lay their hands upon them, even in sacred spaces or during sacred months.

This ruling was legislated to expose the idolaters to destruction and annihilation, so that the face of the earth would gradually be cleansed of them, and people would be spared from mixing with them and associating with them after the elapsing of the grace period mentioned in the verse: *Travel in the land for four months* (9:2).

The upshot of this is that the passage *kill the polytheists wherever you find them, capture them and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every ambush* details the different ways in which they can be destroyed and depleted, in order to spare human society their evil.

Therefore, if the Muslims are able to lay hands on them and can kill them, they should kill them. If they are not able to do that, they should seize them and take them captive, and if they cannot do that they should besiege them and contain them in their locales to prevent them from coming out and mixing with the population, and if their locale is not known to the Muslims, they should lie in wait for them at every opportunity to either kill or capture them.

Alternatively, perhaps what is meant is what some commentators have suggested, namely that it should be read as *kill the polytheists wherever you find them* or *capture them and besiege them*. In other words, the verse presents

a choice (*takhyīr*) to the Muslims, in which they can do whatever is most expedient. However, this is a somewhat wrought reading, as it requires us to imagine that capturing, besieging, and ambushing the idolaters are together a single option and that killing them is another. In any case, the context only supports the reading we have suggested.

As for the argument that the passage, *kill the polytheists wherever you find them, capture them*, should be read as saying seize the polytheists wherever you find them and kill them, this is an arbitrary rearrangement of the verses meaning without there being any evidence to support such an intervention. Both the passage itself and the remainder of the verse precludes such a reading.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is that once the sacred months have passed and the four-month grace period granted to the idolaters in the verse *Travel in the land for four months* (9:2) has elapsed, then destroy the idolaters by any means at your disposal that you see fit, wipe them out entirely by killing them wherever you find them, even in sacred places and times. Seize them, besiege them, and lay in wait for them at every opportunity until they have been completely extirpated.

But if they repent, and maintain the prayer and give the zakāt, then let them alone. Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful: Here, God sets a condition as a limit (*ghāya*) to the aforementioned ordinance. The term *tawba* (repentance) here is used in its lexical sense, namely 'to return'—signifying the return from idolatry to monotheism through faith (*īmān*) and demonstrating that through the adoption of monotheistic practices, namely prayer and *zakāt*, and adhering to all of the ordinances of the religion that pertain to their Creator. If they do this, then leave them alone.

Let them alone (lit. clear the way for them) is a figure of speech that evokes the image of travellers continuing on the road unmolested—although it is today a figure of speech that has become cliched in Arabic through overuse—after their way had previously been blocked by assailants. Therefore, to clear the way for them means that they will not be aggressed against.

Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful provides the rationale for the ruling, *then let them alone*. This explains either the form of the command (namely, why God has commanded you to let them alone) or its substance (namely, why you should let them alone). In the first case, this means: God only commanded you to let them alone because He is all-forgiving and all-merciful; he forgives and shows mercy to those who return to Him. In the second case this means: Let them alone because you doing this is itself an expression of God's forgiveness and mercy, and these are two of God's highest attributes.

Therefore, you should adopt the qualities of your Lord when dealing with others. However, the reading that is most harmonious with the apparent meaning of the text is the first one.

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّىٰ يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ أَبْلِغْهُ مَأْمَنَهُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦﴾

(9:6) ***If any of the polytheists seeks asylum from you, grant him asylum until he hears the Word of Allah. Then convey him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know.***

This verse instructs the faithful to grant safe passage to any idolater who seeks it so that they may hear the word of God. Even though this verse is a parenthesis (or is akin to one) that occurs between other verses repudiating the idolaters and revoking their safety, the ruling it contains highlights a duty that must not be forgotten, for it is a duty that constitutes the very foundation of the Prophetic mission and everything it contains: Whether promises or threats, glad tidings or warnings, the confirmation of treaties or the repudiation of them, even the rules of warfare—all of these exist for one purpose, and that is to turn people aside from the path of error and ignorance, lead them to the path of guidance and good sense, save them from the misery of idolatry, and help them attain the felicity of monotheism. Therefore, it is of the highest importance for the faithful to use every means at their disposal to guide those who are astray and to keep the truth alive, no matter how small or trivial, for the truth is the truth, no matter how small. This principle even applies to an idolater from a people with whom there is no treaty, whose safety God has repudiated, whose blood He has declared can be shed without compunction, and the sanctity of whose property and honor He has deemed forfeit. This is because God has only issued this repudiation to uphold the truth and destroy falsehood, so if there is hope of any good coming from such a person, it is wrong to turn them away until one is certain that they will neither be guided nor saved.

Therefore, when an idolater seeks safe passage so that they might learn about the teachings of the true religion and follow them if they become clear to him, then it is obligatory to grant him safe passage. This is in order that he might hear God's word, have the veil of ignorance lifted from his eyes, and be convinced of the truth. If, after this, he persists in his erroneous ways and continues to obstinately reject the truth, then he returns to being one of those

whose guarantee of security has been revoked and whose impurity must be removed from the land by any means available and in whatever way is most expedient. This is what can be understood from the verse, based on the context in which it occurs.

Thus, the meaning of the verse is as follows: If one of those idolaters whose promise of security has been revoked asks you to grant him safe passage so that he might go with you and speak to you about the truth to which you are inviting others, which is contained in the Word of God, grant him safe passage. This is so that he can hear the Word of God and have the veil of ignorance lifted from his eyes. After this, convey him to somewhere that is safe for him so that he will have received complete safety from you. God has only promulgated this ruling and granted them this safety because they are a people who do not know, for there is no blame on the ignorant if there is still hope of them being guided if they are shown the truth.

This Qur'anic ordinance is perhaps the highest embodiment imaginable of the morality, dignity, mercy, kindness, and respect for humanity which the religion of Islam calls upon its followers to practice.

Based on what we have already discussed previously, the following is apparent: First, this verse restricts the meaning of the general command to *kill the polytheists wherever you find them* (9:5).

Second, the purpose of granting an idolater safety is so that *he hears the Word of Allah*. Therefore, if an idolater requests safe passage in order to hear the Word of God and learn about the teachings of the Prophet, then he is granted safe passage to the extent necessary to hear God's Word and discern guidance from error and truth from falsehood. Once he has had the opportunity to do so, his safe passage is at an end and the one who granted it to him must return him to his place of safety. This is somewhere where he will not be threatened by the swords of the Muslims, so that he may go on as before once the two of them part ways and so that he can choose whatever he wishes for himself of his own free-will and free from external pressures.

Third, *the Word of Allah* signifies all of the verses of the Qur'an, although what is really meant here are those verses that explain the fundamental doctrines of the divine religion, expound its core teachings, and provide answers to the doubts or misgivings that the idolater might harbour. This is something that can be understood from the context of the verse.

Based on this, the error of the following is clear: That the meaning of *the Word of Allah* is the verses of the Qur'an discussing monotheism, or that it means Sūrah al-Tawba specifically, or only those verses from the beginning

of it that were conveyed during the Hajj season, as all of these readings place arbitrary restrictions on the meaning of the verse without any clear evidence for such restrictions.

Fourth, *until he hears the Word of Allah* means 'until he has become acquainted with the fundamental doctrines of the religion and its core teachings.' Alternatively, if the one seeking safe passage is an Arab, it could mean 'until he has heard the actual Word of God and understood it.' However, if the one seeking safe passage is not an Arab and does not understand Arabic, then the context of the verse indicates that this means he should gain an understanding of the religion and its teachings.

Fifth, the verse is clear (*muḥkam*), it is not abrogated (*mansūkh*) by another, nor can it be abrogated by any other. This is because it embodies an essential truth of religion that is explicitly affirmed by both the Qur'an and the Prophetic sunnah, namely that there can be no punishment without incontrovertible proof first being offered. No harshness of any kind should be directed towards someone before the truth has been explained to them. One who is ignorant but searching for the truth should never be turned away, nor should one who is unaware of the truth be punished for it. It is the duty of Islam and all the Muslims to grant safety to anyone who seeks it in order to learn about the religion and understand the Prophetic message that they might follow it if they become convinced of its truthfulness. This is an inviolable and immutable principle that cannot be changed so long as Islam is Islam. Therefore, this verse is clear and cannot be abrogated or suspended until the Day of Judgement.

From this, the error of the following claim becomes clear: That the current verse, *If any of the polytheists seeks asylum from you, grant him asylum until he hears the Word of Allah*, has been abrogated by the subsequent verse, *Fight all the polytheists, just as they fight you all* (9:36).

Sixth, this verse only enjoins the Muslims to grant safety to those idolaters who seek it for religious reasons in the hope that they will obtain the good of the religion. It does not say anything at all about granting safety to them without a religious aim or some benefit to the religion. In this case, the previous verse that commands the Muslims to use force against them remains in effect.

Seventh, God adds the injunction, *then convey him to his place of safety*, even though the command to *grant him asylum until he hears the Word of Allah* would have conveyed the intended meaning by itself. This is to show the importance of keeping open the door of guidance for everyone and respecting people's freedom to live and act as they choose. God has avoided passing a final

judgement on anyone so that whether people choose to perish or be saved, they do this of their own free will and having been presented with clear evidence, so that no one can have an argument against God on the Day of Judgement.

Eighth, as some scholars have pointed out, the verse shows that a person must believe in the fundamental doctrines of the religion on the basis of definitive knowledge (*ʿilm yaqīnī*) that is unpolluted by doubt or misgivings. Nothing less than this is acceptable, not even a strong conjecture (*ẓann rājiḥ*), as we have already seen that, in numerous verses of the Qur'an, God condemns people for following conjectures and calls on them to follow knowledge instead, for example: '*Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge*' (17:36), '*They follow nothing but conjectures, and indeed conjecture is no substitute for the truth*' (53:28), and '*They do not have any knowledge of that, and they do nothing but surmise*' (43:20).

If it was enough to believe in the fundamental doctrines of the religion by imitating others (*taqlīd*), God would not have commanded the Muslims to grant safety to anyone who sought it in order to learn about the teachings of Islam. This is because they could have been told to follow Islam blindly and stop investigating whether it is true or false.

Instead, it is necessary for a person to have certainty, whether they arrived at this through a process of rational deduction or some other method of attaining knowledge, even if this came about by coincidence. Note that this is not the same as saying that reason is the only way to demonstrate the truth of the fundamentals of the religion. This is because, while rational deduction is a valid method of arriving at certainty, one can rely on knowledge no matter the method through which it was obtained.

كَيْفَ يَكُونُ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ عَهْدٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعِنْدَ رَسُولِهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۖ فَمَا اسْتَقَامُوا لَكُمْ فَاسْتَقِيمُوا لَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٧﴾

(9:7) ***How shall the polytheists have any treaty with Allah and His Messenger?! Barring those with whom you made a treaty at the Holy Mosque; so long as they are steadfast with you, be steadfast with them. Indeed Allah loves the Godwary.***

This verse explains what was left implicit by the divine ordinance to nullify the treaty with those idolaters who could not be trusted to uphold their

promises and to fight them until they believed in God and submitted to the religion of monotheism. It also explains the exemption made for those idolaters who did not break their agreements and the command to uphold those treaties until they expire.

This verse and the six that follow it explain and clarify both the repudiation of some treaties and the exemption made for others.

How shall the polytheists have any treaty with Allah and His Messenger? This is a rhetorical question intended to deny the possibility of such a treaty. However, the verse also hastens to make an exception for those idolaters who signed their treaty in the Holy Mosque because they did not violate its terms or become lax in upholding their promises: *...so long as they are steadfast with you, be steadfast with them*. This is because being steadfast with those who are steadfast and keeping the peace with those who keep the peace are part and parcel of Godwariness (*taqwā*). That is why God invokes the following rationale at the end of the verse: *Indeed Allah loves the Godwary*. And we have already seen Godwariness invoked in the earlier verse, *So fulfil the treaty with them until its term. Indeed Allah loves the Godwary* (9:4).

كَيْفَ وَإِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ لَا يَرْقُبُوا فِيكُمْ إِلًّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً ۚ يُرْضُونَكُمْ
بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتَأْبَىٰ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ ﴿٨﴾

(9:8) *How? For if they get the better of you, they will observe toward you neither kinship nor covenant* (lā illan wa lā dhimma). *They please you with their mouths while their hearts spurn you; and most of them are transgressors.*

Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says in the *Mufradāt*:

> '*Ill* signifies a manifest connection or bond that stems from an oath or pact. The phrase *qarāba ta'ill* means a bond that is so clear—like a flash of lightning—that it cannot be denied. God says *they will observe toward you neither kinship nor covenant*. One says *āll al-faras* of a horse when it gallops, comparing its speed to that of a lightning strike.'

Elsewhere, he says about the meaning of *dhimma*:

> '*Dhimām* denotes a pledge that a man would be condemned (*dhamm*) for breaking, the same is true of *dhimma* and *madhamma*. One might say: "I have a *madhamma* I will not break," or "he discharged his *madhamma* to them with such-and-such a thing,"

meaning that he repaid his debt to them.' From al-Rāghib's explanation, it is evident that *dhimma* is derived from the root word *dhamm* (rebuke, censure), which is the opposite of *madḥ* (praise, laud).

Perhaps the reason why the verse juxtaposes *ill* with *dhimma* is to show that they will not uphold any aspect of the responsibilities they have towards the faithful, whether these stem from real material foundations, such as the bonds of kinship, in which one is obliged to show concern for the affairs of his relations, or these are based on agreements, such as treaties and pacts sealed by oaths.

Note that this verse repeats the word *How?* (kayf?) to reiterate the point after the exemption made in the previous verse for *those with whom you made a treaty at the Holy Mosque*. This shows that this verse should be read as a continuation, namely: *How shall the polytheists have any treaty with Allah and His Messenger... for if they get the better of you, they will observe toward you neither kinship nor covenant*.

Therefore, the meaning of this verse is: How shall the idolaters have any treaty with God and His Messenger, because if they get the better of you and overpower you, they will not show any regard towards any kinship or agreement they might have with you. They utter pleasing words with their mouths but deny these with their hearts, and most of them are transgressors.

This shows that the phrase, *they please you with their mouths*, is a figure of speech, insofar as it attributes the act of pleasing to their mouths, while in reality they please you with the words they utter from these mouths.

They please you... also provides the rationale for why God has repudiated the treaty with the idolaters: *How shall the polytheists have any treaty... They please you with their mouths while their hearts spurn you; and most of them are transgressors*.

As for the statement, *and most of them are transgressors* (fāsiqūn), this highlights that the majority of them have already broken the treaty in practice, and that they have done this before even having taken the upper hand against you. So, the verse is discussing the condition of the idolaters both individually and collectively: It says that most of them are transgressors who have already broken their treaties and already do not observe either kinship or covenant with regards to the faithful, so do not expect them to observe either of these if they do gain power over you.

اشْتَرَوْا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا

يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩﴾ لَا يَرْقُبُونَ فِي مُؤْمِنٍ إِلًّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

(9:9-10) ***They have sold the signs of Allah for a paltry gain, and have barred from His way. Evil indeed is what they have been doing. They observe toward a believer neither kinship nor covenant, and it is they who are the transgressors.***

The first of these verses explains why, according to the previous verse, *most of them are transgressors*, while also building up to and preparing the ground for the claim made in the second verse: *They observe toward a believer neither kinship nor covenant*.

This shows that they are most likely referred to as *transgressors* in previous verse because they broke their treaties and disregarded their promises, rather than because they disobeyed God's commandments, even if that is also true of them.

The phrase, *...and it is they who are the transgressors* (ʿādūn), explains everything that has been said so far about both their spiritual condition and their physical actions. The sentences provide the answer to an implicit question, namely: 'Given that this is their condition and this is how they behave, you must not think that you have transgressed against them by repudiating your treaty with them. They are the ones who transgressed against you with their barely concealed enmity and hatred, which the majority of them have shown in action by barring from the way of God and neither observing kinship nor covenant with the believers.'

فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ ۗ وَنُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١﴾ وَإِنْ نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُوا أَئِمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ ۙ إِنَّهُمْ لَا أَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

(9:11-12) ***Yet if they repent and maintain the prayer and give the zakāt, then they are your brethren in faith. We elaborate the signs for a people who have knowledge. But if they break their pledges after their having made a treaty and revile your religion, then fight the leaders of unfaith—indeed they have no pledges—maybe they will relinquish.***

These two verses elaborate upon the earlier statement: *If you repent that is better for you; but if you turn your backs know that you cannot thwart Allah*

(9:3).

The meaning of repentance (*tawba*) in this verse is to return to believing in God and His signs. Hence, the verse does not limit itself to repentance but also stipulates that they should *maintain the prayer*—which is the most visible manifestation of worshipping God—*and give the zakāt*—which is the backbone of a religious society. Perhaps these two duties are invoked to symbolise the totality of religious duties by whose performance a person's faith in God and His Signs is rendered complete after believing in God in the first instance.

...then they are your brethren in faith means that they are to be treated as equals to the rest of the faithful and given the same rights that Islam assigns to any other member of the Muslim community. They have the same rights as other Muslims and the same duties as other Muslims. The verse uses the idea of religious brotherhood—a concept also expressed by the verse, *the faithful are indeed brothers* (49:10)—to show that they are of equal status and possess equal rights in the religion because brothers come from a common root and they are equals to one another within the family unit in the eyes of their father, who is the master of the home, and also in their extended family and community.

Now, insofar as this notion of religious brotherhood has actual legal implications, this means that Islamic law genuinely recognizes a kind of kinship between members of Islamic society. This religious kinship confers a legal status with real rational and religious implications in the same way as familial kinship does. Therefore, the Qur'an does not merely invoke the idea of brotherhood in this verse as a metaphor. The Prophet has said: 'The believers are brothers, the lowest of them are looked after by all of them, and they are as a single fist against all others.'

But if they break their pledges after their having made a treaty and revile your religion, then fight the leaders of unfaith—indeed they have no pledges...: The context indicates that these are not the idolaters God commanded the Muslims to fight in the previous verse because they had broken their pledges, who the Qur'an referred to as transgressors who did not observe either kinship or covenant with the believers. They have already broken their oaths and violated their treaties, therefore, it would not make sense for God to repeat the stipulation—*if they break their pledges*—here.

Therefore, these are other people who have signed treatises and made pledges to the leader of the Muslims but subsequently broken these. In other words, they have violated their treaties after making them. Therefore, God commands the Muslims to fight them and revoke their oaths. He refers to them

as *the leaders of unfaith* (ā'immat al-kufr) because they have taken the lead in denying God's signs and others have followed them in that. Therefore, God commands the Muslims to fight all of them, so that perhaps they will desist from violating treaties and breaking oaths.

أَلَا تُقَاتِلُونَ قَوْمًا نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ وَهَمُّوا بِإِخْرَاجِ الرَّسُولِ وَهُمْ بَدَءُوكُمْ
أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۚ أَتَخْشَوْنَهُمْ ۚ فَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَوْهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

(9:13) ***Will you not make war on a people who broke their pledges and resolved to expel the Messenger, and opened against you initially? Do you fear them? But Allah is worthier of being feared by you, should you be faithful.***

This verse and the next four verses encourage the faithful and urge them to fight the idolaters by enumerating the wrongs they committed against God, their desecration of truth and honesty, and their sins and outrages against the Muslims by breaking their oaths, resolving to expel the Prophet, initiating hostilities.

Then, the verses inform the Muslims that their faith in God—in whose hand is all good and evil, benefit and harm—means that they should not fear anyone except Him, if they truly believe in Him. This is supposed to strengthen their hearts and inspire them with courage to face the idolaters. Finally, the Qur'an explains that God is testing their devotion and that they should cut off their relations with the idolaters so that they might receive the reward of those who have attained true faith.

قَاتِلُوهُمْ يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ وَيُخْزِهِمْ وَيَنْصُرْكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَيَشْفِ
صُدُورَ قَوْمٍ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَيُذْهِبْ غَيْظَ قُلُوبِهِمْ ۗ وَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَنْ
يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾

(9:14-15) ***Make war on them so that Allah may punish them by your hands and humiliate them, and help you against them, and heal the hearts of a faithful folk, and remove rage from their hearts, and Allah turns clemently to whomever He wishes, and Allah is all-knowing, all-wise.***

The Qur'an repeats the injunction to fight the idolaters because, after the encouragement and urging of the above verses, the believers will be more

responsive to this command. The original command was new and unexpected, without there being any advance notice or preparation for it. By contrast, this second command was only issued after the audience had been mentally and spiritually prepared to receive it.

Therefore, the phrase that follows this command—*so that Allah may punish them by your hands... and heal the hearts of a faithful folk*—serves to emphasize it and urge those who received it to obey it and execute it upon the idolaters. It reminds the faithful that when they fight the idolaters, God punishes them with their hands, for the believers act as God's implements in this world. This denigrates the idolaters while at the same time promising the believers that God will assist them in their fight, heal their hearts, and remove their anger—all of this is to rouse the faithful to action and to give them the will to fight.

...and Allah turns clemently to whomever He wishes: This serves as an exception, lest the ordinance to fight be followed indiscriminately.

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُتْرَكُوا وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَا رَسُولِهِ وَلَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلِيجَةً ۚ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

(9:16) ***Do you suppose that you will be let off while Allah has not yet ascertained those of you who strive and those who do not take, besides Allah and His Messenger and the faithful, anyone as confidant? Allah is well aware of what you do.***

This verse provides yet another rationale for the divine command to take up arms that is intended to further encourage the faithful to fight, and it reflects the truth of the matter. In short, this world is an abode of trial and tribulation. While human souls are ultimately destined for good or ill and felicity or misery, they come into this world as a blank slate. They can only attain nearness to God through the struggle and sacrifice they undertake for the sake of their belief in God and His signs. Pure faith only becomes manifest through the trials that the believer faces in the arena of action. In this way, God distinguishes the virtuous from the vicious, and the truly faithful from those who merely espouse faith with their tongues.

Therefore, it is necessary to test those who claim that they have sold their lives and properties to God in exchange for paradise and to put them to trial on the battlefield to see which of them is truthful and which of them is dishonest. In this way, it will become clear who fully disowns the enemies of God and

who continues to harbour loyalty and affection for them in his heart, so that God might grant the former life and cause the latter to perish.

Hence, the faithful must obey the command to fight. In fact, they should hasten to do so and compete with one another for it, so that they might demonstrate the veracity of their belief and the purity of their hearts and have proof to show their Lord on the day when there shall be no salvation except through the truth.

Do you suppose that you will be let off: Meaning: Do you think you will be left alone in your present condition while the truth behind your profession of faith in God and His signs has not yet been revealed?

...while Allah has not yet ascertained: In other words, while you have yet to demonstrate your willingness to struggle and disown everything besides God, the Messenger, and the faithful. As we have discussed previously in our commentary on the verse, *Do you suppose that you would enter paradise, while Allah has not yet ascertained those of you who have strived and not ascertained the steadfast?* (3:142), when God speaks about acquiring knowledge of something, this refers to its coming to pass in objective reality, it does not suggest that God is unaware of who truly believes. This point is further illustrated by the end of the present verse: *Allah is well aware of what you do.*

According to al-Rāghib's *Mufradāt*, the word *walīja* (confidant) refers to someone that a person relies upon but who is not a member of his family.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, about the verse, *A repudiation by Allah and His Messenger* (9:1), it is narrated from ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm's father, from Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl, from Ibn Abī ʿUmayr, from Abū al-Ṣabāḥ al-Kinānī, from Imām al-Ṣādiq: 'This verse was revealed after the Messenger of God returned from the Battle of Tabūk, in the ninth year of the Hijra.'

He says: 'When the Messenger of God conquered Mecca, he did not prevent the idolaters from performing the Hajj pilgrimage that year, and it was the custom of the Arabs during the Hajj that whoever entered Mecca and circumambulated the House of God in their garments was not allowed to keep them, so they would give their clothes as charity and not wear them after the circumambulation. Therefore, whoever came to Mecca would borrow a robe for circumambulation and then return it, and if they could not borrow a robe but only had one set of clothes for themselves, they would go

around completely nude.

'A beautiful Arab woman came to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage and sought to borrow a robe, but no one would lend one to her. People told her: "If you go around in your clothes, you will have to give them as charity." She said: "How shall I give them away while I have nothing else to wear?" So she went around the House of God in the nude while people looked on, covering her modesty with one hand at her front and another at her back, reciting the poem:

'"*What shows today in part or full / however much, is against my will.*"

'Prior to the revelation of Sūrah Barā'a, the practice of the Prophet had been not to fight anyone save those who fought him nor to make war on anyone save those who made war on him, in accordance with the verse, *So if they keep out of your way and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then Allah does not allow you any course against them* (4:90). Therefore, up until this point, the Prophet did not fight anyone who kept away from him and avoided fighting him. Then Sūrah Barā'a was revealed and he was commanded to fight the idolaters whether they fought him or not, except those with whom he had made a treaty on the day he conquered Mecca until that treaty expired. These include Ṣafwān ibn Umayya and Suhayl ibn 'Amr. God said: *A repudiation by Allah and His Messenger to the polytheists with whom you had made a treaty: Travel in the land for four months* (9:4), then they will be slain wherever they are thereafter. These four months grace were the last twenty days of Dhū al-Ḥijja, Muḥarram, Ṣafar, Rabīʿ al-Awwal, and the first ten days of Rabīʿ al-Ākhar.

'When Sūrah Barā'a was revealed to the Prophet, he gave it to Abū Bakr and commanded him to go forth to Mecca and recite it to people in Minā on the Day of Sacrifice. When Abū Bakr went forth, Gabriel came down to the Prophet and said: "O Muḥammad, none can deliver it on your behalf save a man who is from you."

'So God's Messenger sent the Commander of the Faithful after Abū Bakr to tell him to return and took the verses from him. Abū Bakr returned to God's Messenger and said: "O Messenger of God, did God reveal something about me?" He said: "No, but God said that only I or a man from myself could deliver this message."'

(2) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, it is narrated from Ḥarīr, from Imām al-Ṣādiq: 'God's Messenger sent Abū Bakr to the pilgrimage with the

repudiation proclamation that he might recite it to the people, but Gabriel came down and told the Prophet: "No one can deliver this message for you except ʿAlī." So he sent for ʿAlī and told him to take his camel al-ʿAḍbāʾ, catch up with Abū Bakr, take the proclamation from him, and recite it to the people in Mecca. Abū Bakr asked: "Is he displeased with me?" He said: "No, but God revealed that none should deliver this message except a man from himself."

ʿThen, when he arrived in Mecca, it was after noon on the Day of Slaughter (*Yawm al-Naḥr*), which is the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage (*Yawm al-Ḥajj al-Akbar*). He said: "I am the messenger of God's Messenger to you!" Then he recited: *A repudiation by Allah and His Messenger to the polytheists with whom you had made a treaty: Travel in the land for four months*—the last twenty days of Dhū al-Ḥijja, Muḥarram, Ṣafar, Rabīʿ al-Awwal, and the first ten days of Rabīʿ al-Ākhar—then he said: "Let none go around the House nude, male or female, and no idolater after this year, and whoever has a treaty with God's Messenger, its duration is for these four months."'

Author's comments: Based on what comes later in the narration, he said this in order to provide an expiration date for the treaties that were of indefinite length. As for those treaties that were already of a fixed duration, they remained valid until their end, as made clear by the verse itself.

(3) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī* and *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, it is narrated from Abū Baṣīr from Imām al-Bāqir: "Alī addressed the people, unsheathed his sword, and said: "None shall circumambulate God's House naked! No idolater may perform the pilgrimage! Whoever had a treaty of fixed duration, it is valid for its duration! And whoever had a treaty without a fixed duration, it is valid for four months!" He addressed them on the Day of Slaughter. The four months grace were the last twenty days of Dhū al-Ḥijja, Muḥarram, Ṣafar, Rabīʿ al-Awwal, and the first ten days of Rabīʿ al-Ākhar... the Day of Slaughter was the Greater Day of the Pilgrimage.'

Author's comments: There are more narrations from the Imāms of the Prophet's Household with the same meaning than can be counted.

(4) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is narrated from ʿAbdallāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal in *Zawāʾid al-Musnad*, Abū al-Shaykh, and Ibn Mardawayh, from ʿAlī: 'When the ten verses of repudiation were revealed to the Prophet, he first called for Abū Bakr to go and recite them to the people of Mecca. Then he summoned me and told me to go after with

Abū Bakr and, when I caught up with him, to take the proclamation from him. Abū Bakr returned and said: "O Messenger of God, was something revealed about me?" He said: "No, but Gabriel came to me and told me that no one could deliver it on my behalf except me or a man from myself."'

(5) In the same source, it is narrated from Ibn Mardawayh, from Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ that the Messenger of God sent Abū Bakr to recite the proclamation of repudiation to the people of Mecca, then he sent ʿAlī after him to take the proclamation from him. This disturbed Abū Bakr, but the Prophet said: 'O Abū Bakr, it cannot be delivered except by me or a man from myself.'

(6) In the same source, Ibn Mardawayh narrates from Abū Rāfiʿ: 'The Messenger of God sent Abū Bakr to the Hajj pilgrimage with the repudiation proclamation, but Gabriel came and told the Prophet: "No one can deliver it on your behalf except you or a man from yourself." So, he sent ʿAlī after him; he met him between Mecca and Medina, took the notice from him, and recited it to the people at the pilgrimage.'

(7) In the same source, Ibn Ḥibbān and Ibn Mardawayh narrate from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī: 'God's Messenger sent Abū Bakr to deliver the proclamation of repudiation on his behalf, but, after he had sent him, he called for ʿAlī and said: "O ʿAlī no one except me or a man from myself can deliver it on my behalf." So, he put ʿAlī upon is camel al-ʿAḍbā' and he travelled until he caught up with Abū Bakr and took the proclamation from him.

'Abū Bakr returned to the Prophet, and he was fearful that God had revealed something about him, so when he arrived, he asked: "What did I do, O Messenger of God?" He said: "Goodness, you are my brother, my companion in the cave, and you will be with me at the Pool, but no one can deliver it on my behalf except me or a man from myself."'

Author's comments: There are other narrations with the same meaning as the ones presented here. *Tafsīr al-Burhān* narrates from Ibn Shahrāshūb, from al-Ṭabrisī, al-Balādhurī, al-Tirmidhī, al-Wāqidī, al-Shaʿbī, al-Sudayy, al-Thaʿlabī, al-Wāḥidī, al-Qurṭubī, al-Qushayrī, al-Samʿānī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Baṭṭa, Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī, al-Aʿmash, and Sammāk ibn Ḥarb, who narrate in their own works from ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr, Abū Hurayra, Anas, Abī Rāfiʿ, Zayd ibn Nafīʿ, Ibn ʿUmar, and Ibn

ʿAbbās the following: ʿWhen *A repudiation by Allah and His Messenger* and the subsequent nine verses were revealed, the Prophet dispatched Abū Bakr to Mecca to convey them to the people. But Gabriel came down and said: "No one can deliver it on your behalf except you or a man from yourself." So, the Prophet said to the Commander of the Faithful: "Take my camel al-ʿAḍbāʾ, catch up with Abū Bakr, and take the proclamation from his hand."

ʿThen, when Abū Bakr returned to the Prophet, he was distressed and said: "O Messenger of God, you considered me worthy of an affair for which people had stretched out their necks, but when I undertook it, you recalled me from it?" He said: "The Trustworthy One descended to me from God and told me, 'No one can deliver the proclamation except you or a man from yourself,' and ʿAlī is from myself, so none can deliver it on my behalf except ʿAlī."'

In the narrations we have cited here and those we have not cited (which are, in fact, even more numerous) and those which we will cite in this regard, there are two main points:

First, that the Prophet sent ʿAlī with the proclamation and recalled Abū Bakr because this was something that God had commanded him to do through Gabriel: 'No one can deliver it on your behalf except you or a man from yourself.' Notice that this injunction is not specific to delivering the repudiation, or the annulment of a treaty. In none of the narrations does Gabriel say, 'None can deliver a repudiation or annul a treaty except you or a man from yourself.' So, there is no basis for saying that this ordinance only applied in the specific case of the proclamation of repudiation, which is what many commentators have claimed. Our position is supported by the categorical nature of the statement, as we shall see.

The second point is that just as ʿAlī was the one to proclaim the repudiation, he was also the one to proclaim the other ordinances, namely that whoever had a treaty of a fixed duration, the treaty would continue to its full term, and whoever had a treaty without a fixed duration, its term would expire after four months. And this is something that is also indicated by the verses of repudiation.

He also delivered the ordinance that no one should go around the House of God naked, which is also a divine commandment per the verse *O Children of Adam! Put on your adornment in every place of prayer* (7:31). Some narrations also cite this verse in this regard, as we shall see.

In addition to these, he delivered the ordinance that no idolater would be allowed to go around the House of God or perform the Hajj pilgrimage after the present year, as indicated by the verse: *O you who have faith! The*

polytheists are indeed unclean: so let them not approach the Holy Mosque after this year (9:28).

There is also a fifth detail mentioned in one of the narrations that have come down on this topic; that he announced that no one shall enter paradise except a believer. This statement is not mentioned in any of the other narrations, and it seems improbable that ʿAlī would include this in the proclamation.[1] After all, this cannot have been something that the idolaters were unaware of by this stage in the Prophet's mission, when so many verses had been already been revealed with this meaning in both Mecca and Medina. However, at the same time, there is nothing to suggest that ʿAlī's mission was confined to conveying the verses of repudiation. On the contrary, he delivered three or four other Qur'anic ordinances at the same time, all of which were included in Gabriel's message to God's Messenger, namely: 'no one can deliver it except you or a man from yourself,' and there is nothing at all to suggest that this only concerned the proclamation of repudiation.

(8) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is narrated from al-Tirmidhī, who declared it a good (*ḥasan*) narration, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and al-Ḥākim, who declared it authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*), and Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Dalā'il*, from Ibn ʿAbbās: 'God's Messenger sent Abū Bakr and told him to proclaim these words, then he sent ʿAlī after him and told him to proclaim them instead. So, they went together, performed the pilgrimage, then ʿAlī stood up during the Days of Tashrīq (the 11th, 12th, and 13th of Dhū al-Ḥijja) and announced: "*A repudiation by Allah and His Messenger to the polytheists with whom you had made a treaty: Travel in the land for four months*. No idolater shall perform the Hajj after this year, nor shall anyone go around the House naked, nor shall anyone enter paradise except a believer"—ʿAlī proclaimed all of these.'

Author's comments: This report is similar in meaning to what we have extracted from the previous narrations.

(9) In the same source, ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Ibn Mundhir, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrate from Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab from Abū Hurayra: 'The Prophet told Abū Bakr to proclaim the repudiation during his pilgrimage.'

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1 There are some narrations which report him saying: 'None shall enter the Kaʿba—or the House—except a believer,' in which case the rule understood from this is akin to the rule that no idolater should circumambulate the House. (Trans.)

Abū Hurayra said: 'Then the Prophet sent ʿAlī after him and told him to proclaim the repudiation while Abū Bakr was already performing the pilgrimage.'

Author's comments: It has come down via a number of Sunnī sources that the Prophet made Abū Bakr his representative for the pilgrimage that year, so he was the Hajj leader while ʿAlī was the one who announced the repudiation to the people. On the other hand, Shīʿī sources say that the Prophet made ʿAlī the Hajj leader and that he entrusted him to announce the verses proclaiming the repudiation to the people. Al-Ṭabrisī mentions this in *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* and al-ʿAyyāshī narrates it from Zurāra from Imām al-Bāqir. This might be supported by the fact that ʿAlī was performing the duties of a judge (*qāḍī*) while on this journey and the Prophet had appointed him in this role. After all, it is obvious that appointing someone as a messenger to deliver the repudiation proclamation does not automatically confer him with the authority to adjudicate in people's disputes. It seems highly plausible that he was given this responsibility as part of his role as Hajj leader. The narration is as follows:

(10) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from al-Ḥasan, from ʿAlī that when the Prophet sent him to announce the repudiation to the people, he said: 'O Prophet, I am not a speaker or a preacher!' He said: 'God abhors that I should permit anyone to convey this message save myself or you.' ʿAlī said: 'If it is necessary, then I will go.' He said: 'Go, for God will steady your tongue and guide your heart.' Then the Prophet placed his hand upon ʿAlī's mouth and said: 'Go and recite it to the people.' He added: 'People shall come to you to resolve their disputes. If two disputants come to you, do not rule in one's favour until you have heard the other, as this is the best way to discern the truth of the matter.'

Author's comments: Traditions with a similar meaning have also been transmitted in Sunnī sources. For example, in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is narrated from Abū al-Shaykh, from ʿAlī: 'The Messenger of God sent me to Yemen with (*Sūrah*) *Barāʾa*, and I said: "O Messenger of God, how can you send me while I am still a young lad, and if I am asked to judge in a matter I will not know what to say?" He said: "Either you must go with it, or I must go with it." He said: "If it must be done, I will go." He said: "Go, for God will steady your tongue and guide your heart." Then, he said: "Go and recite it to the people."'

The fact that this narration makes reference to Yemen casts doubt upon

its authenticity, as it is obvious from the wording of the verses themselves that Sūrah al-Barā'a was recited to the people of Mecca on the Greater Day of the Pilgrimage in Mecca. This does not have anything to do with Yemen or its inhabitants. It seems that the original wording of the narration should have been 'to Mecca,' rather than 'to Yemen,' based on what the verse says about judgement.

(11) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Aḥmad, al-Nasā'ī, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Ibn Mardawayh narrate from Abū Hurayra: 'I was with 'Alī when the Messenger of God sent him with four (ordinances): That no one should go around God's House naked; that the Muslims and idolaters would not make the pilgrimage together after this year; that whoever had a treaty with God's Messenger, the treaty would continue for its duration; and that God and His Messenger had repudiated the idolaters.'

Author's comments: There are multiple narrations transmitted from Abū Hurayra with the same meaning but different phrasing. However, the texts of these narrations are not free of problems, as we shall discuss. The one quoted here is perhaps the strongest of them in this regard.

(12) In the same source, Aḥmad, al-Nasā'ī, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Ibn Mardawayh narrate from Abū Hurayra: 'I was with 'Alī when the Messenger of God sent him to the people of Mecca with (*Sūrah*) *Barā'a*, and we proclaimed that no one would enter paradise except a believer, that no one should go around the House of God naked, that whoever had a treaty with God's Messenger, it would expire in four months' time, and that when these four months had passed, God and His Messenger would be absolved of the idolaters, and no idolater would be allowed to make the Hajj pilgrimage after this year.'

Author's comments: There are obvious textual confusions in this narration. First, because it includes the announcement that none will enter paradise except a believer. We have already discussed how this concept had been presented in numerous verses of the Qur'an from both before and after the Prophet's Emigration over the course of his career, and that this was something everyone would have been aware of, whether Muslim or idolater, city-dweller or nomad. Therefore, what need would there have been to convey this to those assembled?

Secondly, the announcement concerning the treaties between the Messenger of God and the idolaters does not accord with what the Qur'an's own verses have to say on the matter, nor with the numerous narrations we

have already examined, namely that the repudiation would come into effect after four months for everyone.

And thirdly, what we shall mention below.

(13) In the same source, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Dalā'il* narrate from Abū Hurayra: 'Abū Bakr sent me out during that pilgrimage with the announcers he had sent on the Day of Slaughter to deliver the announcement in Minā that no idolater would be allowed perform Hajj after that year, nor would they be allowed to go around the House of God naked. Then the Prophet sent 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib next and told him to announce the repudiation, so on the Day of Slaughter, 'Alī announced with us the repudiation, that no idolater would be permitted to perform Hajj after this year, and that no one should go around the house of God naked.'

(14) In *Tafsīr al-Manār*, it is narrated from al-Tirmidhī, from Ibn 'Abbās that the Prophet sent Abū Bakr... then 'Alī stood up during the Days of Tashrīq and called out: 'God and His Messenger are freed from responsibility for any idolater, so travel in the land for four months, and no idolater shall make the pilgrimage after this year, nor shall they go around the House of God naked, nor shall anyone enter paradise except a believer. 'Alī announced this amongst the pilgrims until his voice became hoarse, then Abū Hurayra took over from him.'

(15) In the same source, from Aḥmad and al-Nasā'ī, it is narrated via Muḥarrar ibn Abī Hurayra from his father: 'I was with 'Alī when the Messenger of God sent him to Mecca with the proclamation of repudiation. We announced that none would enter paradise except every Muslim soul, nor should anyone go around the House of God naked, and that anyone who had a treaty with the Messenger of God, the treaty would be honored for its duration, and that no idolater would be permitted to make the Hajj pilgrimage after this year. I called out with him until I lost my voice.'

Author's comments: You can see that what all of these narrations have in common is the fact that the Prophet sent 'Alī in place of Abū Bakr after Gabriel descended and told him, 'No one can deliver it on your behalf except you or a man from yourself.' This is also reflected in the Prophet's response to Abū Bakr when he asked why he had been relieved of this duty, namely that God had revealed to him words to the effect that 'No one can deliver it on my behalf except me or a man from myself.'

In any case, this statement is general and, as such, it covers not only delivering the repudiation but any divine command that the Prophet needed someone to convey to the people. There is no evidence in the texts of the narrations or anywhere else that this principle only applied to Sūrah Barā'a. The prohibition on circumambulating the Ka'ba naked, or of idolaters attending the Hajj in following years, announcing that treaties with a fixed duration will lapse once this duration is complete, and stipulating a duration for those treaties without a set duration are all clearly divine ordinances revealed along with the Qur'an. Therefore, what is the significance of giving responsibility for these to Abū Bakr and then taking it away, or having Abū Hurayra announce them by himself, or him proclaiming them as part of a group when 'Alī's voice had grown hoarse until he lost his own voice from crying out so much? Were it permitted for Abū Hurayra to undertake this by himself in this situation, then why was it not permitted for Abū Bakr to do likewise?

This is why some commentators such as Ibn Kathīr and others like him have devised a justification for the contents of these narrations in order to defend their validity, namely that the phrase 'No one can deliver it on my behalf except me or a man from myself' only refers to conveying the repudiation; it does not encompass any of the other ordinances that 'Alī proclaimed. Hence, they say, the Prophet only appointed 'Alī to convey the verses of Sūrah Barā'a to the assembled pilgrims because it was the custom of the Arabs that a treaty could not be broken except by one of its parties or a man from his own household, and that it was out of respect for this custom that the Prophet sent 'Alī to take over delivery of the proclamation from Abū Bakr, as this contained the revocation of the treaty with the idolaters.

This, they say, is what it meant when Abū Bakr asked the Prophet: 'O Messenger of God, was something revealed about me?' He said: 'No, but no one can deliver it on my behalf except me or a man from myself.' In other words: 'I only removed you and sent 'Alī out of respect for this Arab custom.'

Therefore, this appointment did not deprive Abū Bakr from his position as leader of the Hajj, and Abū Bakr had announcers proclaiming these new ordinances to the pilgrims, such as Abū Hurayra and other men whose names are not mentioned in the narrations. 'Alī was one of those with this task, which is why some narrations describe Abū Bakr delivering a sermon to the pilgrims in Minā before turning to 'Alī and telling him: 'Stand up, O 'Alī and deliver the message of God's Messenger.' These are the justifications offered for these accounts.

However, when examining these verses and narrations, a critical researcher

will ponder the theological disagreements that erupted between Sunnī and Shīʿī Muslims and recall that both sects sought to demonstrate the superiority of their favoured candidate to succeed the Prophet (i.e. Abū Bakr or ʿAlī) over the other. Furthermore, they will not doubt that the scholars of these two sects have confused the study of exegesis (*tafsīr*), the study of narrations (*riwāyāt*), and the study of theology with one another. The purpose of exegesis is to uncover the meanings of the Qur'an's verses; the purpose of the study of narrations is to examine the meaning of narrations in order to distinguish the authentic from the inauthentic amongst them; and the study of theology (*kalām*) is concerned with the question of whether Abū Bakr was superior to ʿAlī or ʿAlī was superior to Abū Bakr. This means that in their commentaries on these accounts, scholars have tended to focus on the question of which was superior in status: leading the Hajj or delivering the verses of Sūrah Barā'a? And, if leading the Hajj was superior, then was it entrusted to ʿAlī or to Abū Bakr? As regards the theological discussion, that is not something we wish to delve into here as it is beyond the aims of our present work. However, from the perspective of exegesis and narrations, insofar as these are connected to the meaning of the verses, it can be said that these scholars have erred in their explanation of these verses.

I would like to know from whence these scholars have drawn the conclusion that the Prophet's statement, 'No one can deliver it on my behalf except me or a man from myself,' is restricted to the breaking of treaties and does not apply to anything else beyond that. There is no evidence for this from reason or revelation. Furthermore, the Prophet's statement is already clear in its meaning, namely that the Messenger of God was responsible for conveying this message and that no one could perform this duty except him or a man from himself. The breaking of the treaty with the idolaters was something ordained by God, as was the repudiation, or any other ordinance He sent down to the Prophet that was the responsibility of God's Messenger to convey.

This is distinct from those messages of his that he was not charged with conveying to others personally, such as the letters he sent to different kings, nations, and peoples summoning them to embrace Islam. The same is true of the other letters he sent via faithful men to instruct people in matters of religion or concerning affairs of government, leadership, and the like thereof.

However, there is a clear difference between these sorts of matters and that of the repudiation proclamation and similar affairs: In addition to the verses of repudiation, it also prohibited circumambulation while naked and forbade idolaters from performing Hajj after that year. These were new divine

ordinances that had not yet been conveyed to those who needed to hear them, namely those idolaters who were resident in Mecca and those visiting it as pilgrims. For a message of this importance and magnitude, none could deliver it on behalf of God except His Messenger. In other circumstances, where the Prophet used ordinary messengers to convey messages, this was where he had already delivered the original revelation by conveying it to the people around him. This was the case with his summons to submit to God and all of the other teachings of the religion, for which he would say: 'Let those of you who are present convey it to those who are absent.' Then, if he needed to convey an ordinance to someone where ordinary means were not sufficient to convey the message or where using these means to deliver it would prove ineffective, he would write a letter or send an official messenger, as he did when he was summoning emperors and kings to Islam.

If any objective researcher reflects on the meaning of the words 'no one can deliver it on your behalf except you or a man from yourself,' they will note that he said, 'no one can deliver it from for you (*'anka*) except you.' He did not say, 'no one can deliver it except you or a man from yourself' as this would suggest that this person shared his status as a divine messenger. Nor did he say, 'no one can deliver it on your behalf except a man from yourself,' as this would include all of the other messages he charged the ordinary faithful to deliver on his behalf. The fact that he said: 'no one can deliver it on your behalf except you or a man from yourself' shows that he had duties as a divine messenger that only he could discharge and that no one else could undertake in his place except someone who was from himself and could be relied upon not to fail when acting in his stead. One of these duties was delivering new ordinances from God to the people.

I wonder, then, what led these scholars to ignore the revelation that God sent to the Prophet via Gabriel, that 'no one can deliver it on your behalf except you or a man from yourself,' and to explain it away as 'the custom of the Arabs that a treaty could not be broken except by one of its parties or a man from his own household.' After all, this custom of the Arabs is not recorded anywhere in the accounts of their history or battles, and this custom is not mentioned in any discussion except this one, concerning Sūrah Barā'a, in which Ibn Kathīr mentions it and attributes it to other scholars.

Now, if it had indeed been the custom of the pre-Islamic Arabs to do this, what bearing does this custom have on Islam and what value does it have for the Prophet, given that barely a day went by without him abrogating a custom of the pre-Islamic era or breaking the traditions of his people? This

custom does not reflect any lofty moral values or beneficial traditions, rather it embodies the tribal mentality of the pre-Islamic Arabs and the preferences of the clan elders. On the day he conquered Mecca, the Prophet is said to have stood before the Kaʿba and proclaimed: 'Lo! Every exploit, every blood feud, and every claim to wealth is now beneath these two feet of mine, save for the custody of the House of God and quenching the thirst of the pilgrims!'

Even if this had been an inoffensive pre-Islamic custom, did the Prophet disregard it when he entrusted the verses to Abū Bakr and sent him to deliver them to the pilgrims in Mecca? Or did he forget it until, when Abū Bakr was already on his way, he suddenly remembered or was reminded by one of his companions? And even if this was the case, was he then obliged to observe this custom? The Prophet is the paragon of good character, and taking into account whatever needs taking into account is part of judiciousness and good sense. Therefore, how could those who reminded him neglect something so important in the first instance? A custom such as this is not something one simply forgets, any more than a warrior forgets his sword.

Was it a revelation from God that he should not disregard this noble Arab custom, and that it is now a divine ordinance, meaning that it is forbidden for the ruler of the Muslims to revoke a treaty unless he does it himself or entrusts it to a member of his household? What is the sense in such a ruling?

Or was this a moral rule that the Prophet was obliged to observe because the idolaters would not have accepted the revocation of this treaty unless they heard it from him personally or from someone from his household? However, at this time, the Prophet was the one who had dominion over them, so who were they to decide whether or not they would accept such a revocation? He had the power to unilaterally revoke it, with or without their agreement.

Or was it the case that the faithful were the ones being addressed by God's words *with whom you have made a treaty* (9:1), *an announcement from Allah and His Messenger* (9:4), and *kill the polytheists* (9:5)? In which case, does this mean they would not have considered their treaty with the idolaters void unless they heard these words from the Prophet or a member of his household? Would they not have realized that the treaty was voided if they had simply heard the verses from Abū Bakr? If this were the case, then why would anyone who heard the announcement from Abū Hurayra, who proclaimed it until he lost his voice, accept that the treaty was voided? Was Abū Hurayra closer to ʿAlī than Abū Bakr was to the Prophet? The truth is that all of these narrations that portray Abū Hurayra and others proclaiming this message to the people are inauthentic and should not be relied upon as historical accounts.

In *Tafsīr al-Manār*, we read:

> 'The collected narrations show that the Prophet sent Abū Bakr as the leader of the Hajj in the year 9 A.H. and commanded him to inform those idolaters who were performing the pilgrimage that they would not be allowed to perform it after this year. Then, he replaced Abū Bakr with ʿAlī so that the latter could inform them that their treaties were voided, that they had a grace period of four months to consider their options, that those treaties with fixed durations would be honored until their terms had expired, and to recite to them the verses that contained these proclamations from the beginning of Sūrah Barāʾa. These are the first forty or thirty-three verses. The narrations appear to hesitate between these two numbers because some of them count in tens, counting a part thereof as a whole.
>
> 'This is because the custom of the Arabs at the time was that treaties could only be broken by the one who made them or a member of his close family. ʿAlī alone met this criterion, but the leadership of the Hajj remained with Abū Bakr, who helped ʿAlī carry out his duty and assigned some of the Companions such as Abū Hurayra to do this too.'

He also says:

> 'Some of the Shīʿa blow ʿAlī's appointment out of all proportion—as is their habit—and they add to it details from inauthentic sources that do not match what is known from reliable narrations. They claim that this demonstrates that ʿAlī was superior to Abū Bakr and, therefore, more entitled to succeed the Prophet than him. They claim that the Prophet relieved Abū Bakr of his duty to convey Sūrah Barāʾa because Gabriel commanded him to do this, and that he told him that no one could deliver it on his behalf except him or a man from himself. Furthermore, they do not confine this restriction to the breaking of treaties. In fact, they extend it to cover the entirety of the religion.
>
> 'There is an abundance of authentic traditions to the effect that conveying the religion of Islam to others is a collective obligation upon all the Muslims—in the same manner as defensive warfare (*jihād*) is a collective obligation for the sake of protecting it—and that this is a duty, not a mark of superiority. One such tradition is what the Prophet said during the Farewell Pilgrimage (*Hijjat al-Wadāʿ*) to an audience of thousands: "Let those present convey this to those

absent." This statement is repeated in the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and in other collections. In some accounts, Ibn ʿAbbās says: "For by He in whose hand is my soul, it was his last will and testament to his nation: 'Let those present convey this to those absent.'" Then there is the tradition: "Convey from me even but a single verse of the Qur'an." Al-Bukhārī narrates it in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* and al-Tirmidhī narrates it in his *Sunan*. If it were not for sayings such as this, Islam would not have spread so quickly across the globe.

'In fact, some of the Shīʿa reportedly claim that he removed Abū Bakr from his post as the leader of the Hajj and appointed ʿAlī in his place. This is a manifest falsehood that contradicts everything that has been narrated about this practical issue that is known to experts and laymen alike.

'The truth is that ʿAlī—may God ennoble his countenance—was charged with conveying a specific message but, on that pilgrimage, he went as a follower of Abū Bakr, who had overall responsibility for overseeing the performance of this annual collective pillar of Islam. This was to the extent that it was Abū Bakr who told him when he should convey the message. Recall that he said: "Stand up, O ʿAlī and deliver the message of God's Messenger." Then he appointed some of the Companions to help him convey it to others, as we saw in the account of Abū Hurayra that is narrated in the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s and other works.'

The author (of *Tafsīr al-Manār*) then says that Abū Bakr's leadership of the Hajj, combined with his leadership of the prayer in place of the Prophet during the latter's final illness, constitutes clear evidence of his superiority above all of the other Companions and, therefore, his priority to succeed the Prophet.

As for his claim that there is an abundance of authentic traditions to the effect that conveying the religion of Islam to others is a collective obligation upon all the Muslims, this shows that he has not properly understood the meaning of the divine command that was revealed to the Prophet: 'No one can deliver it on your behalf you except you or a man from yourself.' He has failed to realize the difference between saying, 'no one can deliver it on your behalf (*ʿanka*) except you or a man from yourself,' and the saying, 'no you can deliver it from you (*minka*) except you or a man from yourself.' As a result of this confusion, he claims that if we take the former statement ('on your behalf') as categorical, this means that no one except the Prophet or a man

from himself can convey any aspect of the religion to anyone else. Therefore, he believes that the abundant traditions commanding Muslims to convey their religion to others as a collective obligation refutes it and qualifies the statement, 'no one can deliver it on your behalf...', making it specific to conveying the revocation of the treaty and reducing God's ordinance to a mere pre-Islamic Arab custom.

This confusion of terms leads him to claim that reading the statement 'no one can deliver it on your behalf' as categorical would lead to people neglecting a duty that is considered essential by the totality of the Muslims, namely the duty to convey the message of Islam to others. This is to the extent that he invokes evidence from the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s and other works in the form of the Prophetic saying: 'Let those present convey this to those absent,' and readers will already have noted that the Prophet's statement, 'no one can deliver it' refers to new revelations, rather than the teachings of the religion as a whole.

As for his claim, 'In fact, some of the Shīʿa reportedly claim that he removed Abū Bakr from his post as the leader of the Hajj and appointed ʿAlī in his place. This is a manifest falsehood that contradicts everything that has been narrated about this practical issue that is known to experts and laymen alike,' this is neither merely a claim or a falsehood (in fact, he is the one uttering falsehoods). On the contrary, this is an account reported in Shīʿī sources, which we have presented above.

Disputes about the question of who led the Hajj pilgrimage that year are not our primary concern in discussing the statement, 'No one can deliver it on your behalf you except you or a man from yourself.' After all, whether Abū Bakr led the Hajj or whether ʿAlī did, and whether leading the Hajj indicated either of them were superior over the other, the fact is that leading the pilgrimage falls within the scope of general Islamic authority, which is concerned with managing the daily affairs of Muslim society and implementing the divine laws. It has nothing to do with divine knowledge or the contents of the revelation sent down from the heavens on matters of religious teaching.

On the contrary, it is merely a function of the Prophet's authority as a political leader to appoint Abū Bakr or ʿAlī as the leader of the Hajj. On another day, he gave Usāma ibn Zayd authority over Abū Bakr and all of the Companions on a military expedition. On another day, he appointed Ibn Umm Maktūm as the governor of Medina, even while the city had people superior to him living in it. He appointed someone else governor of Mecca after its conquest, and another person still as governor of Yemen. He put someone else in charge of tax collection. He even made Abū Dajāna al-Sāʿidī or Sabbāʿ

ibn ʿArfaṭa al-Ghaffārī (according to the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām) governor of Medina in the year of the Farewell Pilgrimage before Abū Bakr had departed on the Hajj pilgrimage according to what has been narrated in al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasāʾī, and other collections. But none of this signifies anything more than the fact that these individuals were qualified for the roles they were given—it certainly does not render them superior to all others.

As for divine revelation, which contains God's teachings and ordinances for mankind, the Prophet cannot delegate this task to someone who is lesser than him. Nor does anyone occupying positions of temporal authority over Muslim society have the right to deal with matters of revelation, whether by declaring verses general or particular, or confirming it or abrogating it. Furthermore, divine revelation is not dictated by the pre-Islamic customs of a particular people, such that it needs to accord with these in order to keep people happy.

By confusing these two distinct arenas of authority, we bring down the divine teachings from the apogee of dignity to the perigee of social thought, and reduce them to nothing more than norms, customs, and conventions. Thus, the human being explains metaphysical realities in a way that ordinary minds can comprehend and treats as important what society considers important rather than what God considers important, while neglecting what people neglect, until it reaches the point that someone says that a divine revelation is nothing more than a pre-Islamic Arab custom.

If you ponder on the account of how the verses of repudiation were taken from Abū Bakr and given to ʿAlī as presented in these narrations, you find that the narrators have been surprisingly lax in their preservation of the material, even expanding them to include additional details from the narrators themselves (this is assuming that these accounts have not been distorted to serve some agenda). For example, in the majority of them, we are told that the Prophet sent Abū Bakr to deliver the verses to the idolaters but then sent for ʿAlī and told him to take the verses from him and deliver them to the people instead, so Abū Bakr came back. In others, we are told that he sent Abū Bakr as the leader of the Hajj pilgrimage but then sent ʿAlī after him with the verses of Sūrah Barāʾa. Others still say that Abū Bakr himself told ʿAlī to convey the verses and then ordered other Companions to assist him in delivering the message.

Meanwhile, al-Ṭabarī and others relate from al-Mujāhid concerning the verse, *A repudiation by Allah and His Messenger to the polytheists with whom you had made a treaty* (9:1), that it concerned treaties between the Muslims

and the Khuzāʿa, Mudlij, and other tribes. According to this version of events, 'God's Messenger returned from the Battle of Tabūk and decided to perform the pilgrimage. However, when he arrived at the House of God, he saw the idolaters going about it in the nude and did not want to perform the pilgrimage so long as this was the case. So, he sent Abū Bakr and ʿAlī amongst the people in Dhū al-Majāz and to the places where they were engaged in trade and throughout the pilgrimage season they went around and told those idolaters who had treaties with the Prophet that these treaties would expire no later than four months thence. These four months were the four consecutive sacred months—the twenty latter days of Dhū al-Hijja until the first ten of Rabīʿ al-Awwal (sic), after which the treaty would be null and void and people would fight them until they were dead.'

If this is the case, then how can the author of *Tafsīr al-Manār* say that Shīʿī claims are 'a manifest falsehood that contradicts everything that has been narrated about this practical issue that is known to experts and laymen alike'? If he means everyone at the time of the Prophet who saw this or heard about it first-hand from those who did, what benefit is this to us now?

If he meant that it was known to experts and laymen from the era immediately after that of the Prophet or the era that followed this, and that they knew this and did not doubt it in the least, then why do there exist contradictory narrations from them that disagree on important details in their accounts? For example, some of them say that only ʿAlī could deliver the proclamation of repudiation, while others indicate that Abū Bakr helped him, and others still say that Abū Hurayra and other unnamed persons assisted with this. Some say that there were nine verses, while others say ten, and others still say sixteen, or thirty, or thirty-three, or thirty-seven, or forty, or the entirety of the chapter.

Furthermore, accounts differ about what Abū Bakr did when ʿAlī took the verses from him. Some say that Abū Bakr continued on his way as the leader of Hajj, while others say that he came back, which has forced some commentators such as Ibn Kathīr to attempt to reconcile this by saying he only returned after the pilgrimage was completed. But then, other accounts said that he came back to the Prophet to ask why he was relieved of his duty. In the narration of Anas that we shall consider below, the Prophet reportedly sent Abū Bakr with Sūrah Barāʾa, only to recall him and take the verses from him.

Then there are reports that disagree on the day on which this announcement took place. Some say that the Hajj took place in the month of Dhū al-Ḥijja and that the Greater Day of the Pilgrimage refers to all the days of the pilgrimage, or to the Day of ʿArafa, or to the Day of Slaughter, or to the day

after the Day of Slaughter, or to other days entirely. Then there are accounts that say Abū Bakr performed the pilgrimage that year in Dhū al-Qaʿda.

What about the four months grace period? Some reports say that this began in Shawwāl, others say it began in Dhū al-Qaʿda, while others say it began on the tenth of Dhū al-Ḥijja, and others still say it began on the eleventh of that month, and there are more reports and dates besides this. Some of these say the grace period corresponded to the pre-Islamic forbidden months of Dhū al-Qaʿda, Dhū al-Ḥijja, and Muḥarram, while others still say that it began on the day the message was delivered or on the day it was sent down by God.

This is the state of disagreement between these narrations. With this in mind, how can anyone claim that anything about this was known to everyone, the experts and the laity alike? Bear in mind also that some of these explanations given above, even if they are statements from early commentators, the statements of early commentators are no different in practice from traditions with incomplete chains of narration, and they should be treated as such.

Now, let us address the claim in *Tafsīr al-Manār* that 'the truth is that ʿAlī was charged with conveying a specific message but, on that pilgrimage, he went as a follower of Abū Bakr, who was the leader of the Hajj.' There is no doubt that when the Prophet entrusted ʿAlī with delivering the verses of *Barāʾa* and the other four proclamations mentioned above, this was a special task. Recall, previously, that when Gabriel revealed to the Prophet, 'No one can deliver it on your behalf except you or a man from yourself,' he did not specify that this was in relation to the verses of repudiation. Therefore, we should not mix up the meaning of Gabriel's statement with the specific mission given to ʿAlī on that journey.

As for the claim that ʿAlī was under Abū Bakr's authority on that pilgrimage, this is something he has deduced from the account of Abū Hurayra. However, we have already highlighted the problems with his retelling of events.

(16) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is narrated from Ibn Abī Shayba, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and al-Tirmidhī and deemed reliable by Abū al-Shaykh and Ibn Mardawayh from Anas: 'The Prophet sent the repudiation with Abū Bakr, then he recalled him and said: "It does not behove anyone to convey this except a man from my own family (*min ahlī*)," so he called ʿAlī and gave it to him.'

Author's comments: Rashīd Riḍā—the author of *Tafsīr al-Manār*—argues that his statement, 'or a man from myself,' found in the narration of al-Sudayy, has been explained by other narrations in al-Ṭabarī and elsewhere, such as the phrase 'or a man from my household (*min ahl baytī*).' This, he

says, refutes the claim that the phrase 'from myself' (*minnī*) means that the soul of ʿAlī is like the soul of God's Messenger, or that he is akin to him, or that he is superior to all of the other Companions.

The narrations he is referring to are those which he previously cited: 'And Aḥmad narrates with a reliable chain of narrators from Anas: "The Prophet sent the repudiation with Abū Bakr, but when he reached Dhū al-Ḥulayfa, he said: 'None can convey this except a man from my own family (*min ahlī*),' so he sent ʿAlī with them instead."' As you can see, this is almost identical to the narration from Anas we have already quoted above and—both contain the phrase 'or a man from my own family'—and even where there are disparities in the wording, the meaning is essentially the same.

However, the problems with Rashīd Riḍā's claims are as follows:

First, the phrase 'or a man from myself' (*aw rajul minnī*) only occurs in a single version of the tradition, with an incomplete (*mawqūf*) chain of narrators, namely the narration of al-Sudayy which he has already criticized as weak (*ḍaʿīf*). Instead, the phrase 'or a man from yourself' (*aw rajul minka*) was used in the revelation from Gabriel that is recorded in the majority of the authentic narrations. Rashīd Riḍā further claims that the Prophet used the phrase 'a man from my household' (*min ahl baytī*) in many narrations when, in fact, there is only the single narration from Anas that uses this phrasing. Even then, it uses the word *ahl* (family) rather than *ahl bayt* (household).

Second, these narrations—as has become clear—have been transmitted by meaning rather than by words. Therefore, you cannot use their vocabulary to explain the wording of Gabriel's revelation that is recorded in the majority of authentic accounts of this event found in both Sunnī and Shīʿa collections of traditions.

Therefore, if the phrase *min ahl baytī* (from my household) was suitable to explain the phrases *rajul minka* (a man from yourself) or *rajul minnī* (a man from myself), then the same rule would apply to this narration and all of the other narrations with regard to the aforementioned narration from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī. In it, the Prophet says: 'O ʿAlī, none can deliver this on my behalf except me or you.' Therefore, can this not be adduced to explain the meaning of Anas' narration 'except a man from my household' or 'except a man from my family,' and the other narrations as well, 'except a man from yourself,' and 'except a man from myself.' In which case, all of these phrases can be interpreted as references not only to the person of ʿAlī as being the only person suitable for the task at hand, but also to the idea that the soul of ʿAlī is like the soul (*nafs*) of the Prophet, as well as being from his family (*ahl*) and

his household (*ahl bayt*). Therefore, by making this claim, Rashīd Riḍā ends up with precisely what he had hoped to avoid, and even more.

Third, the idea that ʿAlī is in the position of the Prophet's self or soul (*nafs*) is not based solely on this one tradition and the phrase '*rajul minnī*,' as Rashīd Riḍā seems to suppose. After all, if someone was to say: 'so-and-so is from myself' (*fulān minnī*), this would not imply that they considered this person to be like themselves in every aspect of their existence and a resemblance of them. On the contrary, such a statement would only indicate that there was some connection between them and that the other person shared some similarities with them. For example, look at Abraham's statement: *So whoever follows me is indeed from me* (14:36). This is unless, of course, there is some contextual indication that the speaker intends a closer connection than this, for example, as we find in the verse: *Any of you who allies with them is indeed one of them* (5:51).

On the contrary, it is not understood merely from the phrase 'a man from myself' or 'a man from yourself,' but from the fact that this appears alongside the injunction: 'No one can deliver it on your behalf except you.' Now, based on what we have already said, if Gabriel had said: 'No one can deliver it on your behalf except you or a man from your family' or 'a man from your household,' then we would deduce the same significance that we deduce from 'No one can deliver it on your behalf except you or a man from yourself' or 'No one can deliver it on my behalf except me or a man from myself.' This is in addition to the fact that he explains his decision to Abū Bakr using this phrase, when Abū Bakr could be seen as being 'from himself' by virtue of the fact that Abū Bakr was one of his followers.[1]

Fourth, Rashīd Riḍā neglects the abundant—or successively narrated (*mutawātir*)—authentic traditions that indicate that the Prophet's Household are ʿAlī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn, as we have already mentioned in our commentary on the Verse of *Mubāhila* and as we shall discuss in greater detail in our treatment of the Verse of Purification (*Āyat al-Taṭhīr*).

At the time Sūrah Barāʾa was revealed, then, there was no man in the

1 In the narration of al-Ḥākim from Musʿab b. ʿAbd al-Raḥman, from his father, from the Prophet—quoted below—he tells the people of Ṭāʾif: 'By He in whose hand is my soul, you will surely establish the prayer and pay the *zakāt*, or I will send against you a man from myself' or 'a man like myself.' People thought that when he said this, he meant Abū Bakr or ʿUmar, but then he took the hand of ʿAlī and said: 'I will send this one,' to remove any doubts about whom he had meant. (Trans.)

Prophet's Household except ʿAlī, which would mean that no matter which of these phrases was used ('a man from myself,' 'a man from my family,' or 'a man from my household'), it was intended as an allusion to Imām ʿAlī. This leaves us with the same conclusion as above.

Rashīd Riḍā seems to believe that the phrase 'from my household' (*min ahl baytī*) is of broad scope, encompassing all of the Prophet's relatives from the Banū Hāshim or from the Banū Hāshim and his womenfolk. In interpreting it in this manner, he renders it an ordinary term and removes any special distinction from being conferred upon the members of the Prophet's Household. With this in mind, the meaning of the statement becomes 'no one can annul the treaty on my behalf except a man from the Banū Hāshim.' However, this reading depends upon us looking only at the meaning of these words in everyday language, rather than considering their significance within the framework of the religion. We have already discussed this in relation to the words *ibn* (son) and *bint* (daughter) when debating whether the son of a man's daughter can also be called his son by extension. There are those who base their argument purely on the conventions of language, namely whether or not the standard usage of the language allows such a claim. However, this represents a confusion between the two realms of vocabulary and meaning, or between social conventions and divine religious ones, as we have already explained elsewhere.

However, possibly the strangest claim that Rashīd Riḍā makes is that the tradition he cites is an explicit and unambiguous (*naṣṣ*) refutation of the Shīʿī understanding of the phrase 'from myself' (*minnī*). In other words, he believes that the phrase 'from my household' (*min ahl baytī*) explicitly and unambiguously shows that the meaning of 'from myself' means 'from the Banū Hāshim.' However, we have no idea from whence he produces the claim that the phrase *ahl al-bayt* explicitly and unambiguously denotes the Banū Hāshim. After all, there are countless narrations to the effect that the *ahl al-bayt* of the Prophet are ʿAlī and Fāṭima and their two sons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. How then, can he assert that 'my household' (*ahl baytī*) refers to the Banū Hāshim as a whole and then, from that, claim that 'from myself' also refers to the Banū Hāshim as a whole? This is an utterly untenable thesis.

(17) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Zurāra, Ḥumrān, and Muḥammad ibn Muslim from Imām al-Bāqir and Imām al-Ṣādiq about the verse *Travel in the land for four months* (9:2): 'The last twenty days of Dhū al-Ḥijja, the months of Muḥarram, Ṣafar, and Rabīʿ al-Awwal, then the first ten days of Rabīʿ al-Ākhar.'

Author's comments: There are countless narrations in Shīʿī collections from the Imāms of the Prophet's Household to the effect that this is what the phrase *four months* in the aforementioned verse. This is narrated by al-Kulaynī, al-Ṣadūq, al-ʿAyyāshī, al-Qummī, and others in their works. It has also been narrated in Sunnī collections. However, Sunnīs narrate other traditions that contradict this interpretation, including some which claim that Abū Bakr performed the pilgrimage with the people in the year 9 A.H. during the month of Dhū al-Qaʿda. However, these are unsubstantiated, so we have omitted them.

(18) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Ḥakīm ibn Jubayr, from ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, concerning the verse, *And an announcement from Allah and His Messenger* (9:3): 'An announcement by the Commander of the Faithful.'

Author's comments: This meaning has also been narrated by Ḥurayz from Imām al-Ṣādiq, and by Jābir from both him and Imām al-Bāqir. Al-Qummī narrates a tradition from his father, from Faḍḍāla, from Abān ibn ʿUthmān, from Ḥakīm ibn Jubayr, from ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, in which he relates the following words of Imām ʿAlī: 'I was the one who delivered the announcement to the people.' Al-Ṣadūq transmits the same via a chain of narrators going back to Ḥakīm from him. It is narrated in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, from Ḥaīm ibn Ḥamīd, from ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn. In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, we read: 'Al-Sudayy and Abū Mālik and Ibn ʿAbbās and Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn say: "The announcement was delivered by ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib."'

(19) Also in *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is narrated via al-Ṣadūq, via his chain of narrators from al-Fuḍayl ibn ʿAyyāḍ, from Imām al-Ṣādiq. Al-Fuḍayl asked him asked about *the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage* (9:3). He responded: 'Do you know anything about it?' The narrator replied: 'Yes, Ibn ʿAbbās used to say: *The Day of the Greater Pilgrimage* is the Day of ʿArafa until sunrise on the Day of Slaughter, meaning that whoever participated in the Day of ʿArafa had participated in the Hajj, but that whoever missed it had missed the Hajj. Therefore, it goes from the eve of ʿArafa until the end of the night that follows it. The evidence for that is that whoever reaches the eve of the Day of Slaughter before sunrise is said to have reached Hajj on time. Therefore, the eve of the Day of Slaughter is considered part of the Day of ʿArafa.'

Then Imām al-Ṣādiq said: 'The Commander of the Faithful said, "*The Day of the Greater Pilgrimage* is the Day of Slaughter." And he supported this with God's saying: *Travel in the land for four*

months, which is the last twenty days of Dhū al-Ḥijja, the months of Muḥarram, Ṣafar, and Rabīʿ al-Awwal, then the first ten days of Rabīʿ al-Ākhar. If *The Day of the Greater Pilgrimage* was the Day of ʿArafa, then the idolaters would have been given four months and a day to travel in the land. He further supported this with the passage, *and an announcement from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage*, saying: "I was the one who delivered the announcement to the people."'

Al-Fuḍayl asked: 'Then what is the meaning of this phrase, *the Greater Pilgrimage* (al-Ḥajj al-Akbar)?' He replied: 'It is only called "greater" because it took place in the only year in which both the Muslims and the idolaters made the pilgrimage. The idolaters did not perform the Hajj in following years.'

(20) In the same source it is narrated from him, via his chain of narrators leading to Muʿāwiya ibn ʿAmmār, who related: 'I asked Abū ʿAbdallāh about *the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage*. He said: "The Day of Slaughter and the lesser *ʿumra*."'

Author's comments: In addition to associating the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage with the Day of Slaughter, the above narration also explains why it was called the Day of the "Greater" Pilgrimage. All of the narrations of the Imāms of the Prophet's Household, barring those which are irregular (*shādhdh*), say that the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage mentioned in the verse was a reference to the Day of Slaughter, which fell on the tenth of Dhū al-Ḥijja. They narrate this from Imām ʿAlī.

Al-Kulaynī narrates this tradition in *al-Kāfī* from ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm, from his father, from Ibn Abī ʿUmayr, from Muʿāwiya ibn ʿAmmār, from Imām al-Ṣādiq. He also narrates it via Dhurayḥ from him, as does Shaykh al-Ṣadūq. Al-ʿAyyāshī narrates it from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, Ibn Udhayna, and al-Fuḍayl ibn ʿAyyāḍ, from him as well.

(21) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is narrated from Ibn Mardawayh, from Ibn Abī Awfā, from the Prophet, that he said on ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā: 'This is the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage.'

(22) In the same source, al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Māja, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh, and Abū Muʿaym in *al-Ḥilya* narrate from Ibn ʿUmar that the Messenger of God stood on the Day of Slaughter between the stone pillars (*jamārāt*) while he performed his Hajj pilgrimage and asked of those assembled: 'What is today?' They responded: 'It is the Day

of Slaughter.' He said: 'Today is the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage.'

Author's comments: This has been narrated via various routes from ʿAlī, Ibn ʿAbbās, Mughīra ibn Shuʿba, Abū Juḥayfa, and ʿAbdallāh ibn Abī Awfā. It has also been narrated by various routes from the Prophet that it is the Day of ʿArafa. This has also been narrated from ʿAlī, Ibn ʿAbbās, Ibn al-Zubayr. Meanwhile, it is narrated from Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab that it the day after the Day of Slaughter. It has also been narrated that it is all the days of the pilgrimage, and that it is the pilgrimage in the year that Abū Bakr performed the Hajj. The latter most of these reports is compatible with the tradition reported from Imām al-Ṣādiq, above, in which he said that it was called the Day of the Greater Pilgrimage because it was the year in which the idolaters and the Muslims both made the pilgrimage.

(23) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Zurāra, from Imām al-Bāqir, concerning the verse, *Then, when the sacred months have passed, kill the polytheists wherever you find them, capture them and besiege them* (9:5): '(The period of grace) lasted from the Day of Slaughter to the tenth of Rabīʿ al-Ākhar.

(24) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, about the verse, *Yet if they repent, and maintain the prayer and give the zakāt* (9:5), al-Ḥākim narrates and deems authentic a tradition from Muʿab ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, from his father: 'The Messenger of God conquered Mecca, then he went to Ṭā'if and besieged it for seven or eight consecutive days, then he besieged it alternatively. Then he addressed the inhabitants: "O people, I shall leave this world before you, so I enjoin you to treat my progeny well, your tryst (with me) is at the Pool of Paradise. By He in whose hand is my soul, you will maintain the prayer and pay the *zakāt* or I shall send upon you a man from myself or like unto myself, and he will strike the necks of your fighters and take captive their progeny." People thought that he was referring to Abū Bakr or ʿUmar, but then he took the hand of ʿAlī and said: "I will send this one."'

Author's comments: He was referring to the disbelievers.

(25) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, a tradition narrated by Jābir from Imām al-Bāqir reads: '*Yet if they repent* means: "If they believe, *then they are your brethren in faith*."'

(26) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, about the verse *If any of the polytheists seeks asylum from you, grant him asylum* (9:6), we read: 'It means you should recite the Qur'an to him and inform him (about the religion), then you should not aggress against him until he has returned to his

place of safety.'

(27) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is narrated from Ibn Shahrāshūb, from the *Tafsīr* of al-Qushayrī that a man said to ʿAlī: 'O Son of Abū Ṭālib! What if one of us wants to meet the Messenger of God concerning some matter after these four months have concluded and he does not have a treaty?' ʿAlī said: 'Of course (he can), because God has said *If any of the polytheists seeks asylum from you, grant him asylum* (9:6).'

(28) In *Durr al-Manthūr*, about the verse *But if they break their pledges after their having made a treaty* (9:12), it is narrated from Ibn Abī Shayba and Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Abū al-Shaykh and Ibn Mardawayh from Ḥudhayfa: that they mentioned this verse to him and he said: 'The people this verse refers to have not yet been fought.'

(29) In the same source, it is narrated from Ibn Abī Shayba, al-Bukhārī, and Ibn Mardawayh, from Zayd ibn Wahb, concerning the verse, *then fight the leaders of unfaith* (9:12): 'We were with Ḥudhayfa and he said: "Of the ones referred to by this verse, only three remain, and of the hypocrites, only four." A Bedouin asked: "You are the Companions of Muḥammad, will you inform us of those matters of which we are unaware? Who are the ones who raid our tends and steal our cattle?" He said: "They are the sinners (*fussāq*). Yes, only four of them remain. One of them is an old man who if he drank cool water he would not taste its coolness."'

(30) In his *Qurb al-Isnād*, al-Ḥimyarī narrates from ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and ʿAbd al-Ṣamad ibn Muḥammad, both from Ḥanān ibn Sudayr, who said: 'I head Abū ʿAbdallāh (al-Ṣādiq) say: "I was visited by people from Basra. They asked me about Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr. I told them: 'They were leaders of unfaith. At the Battle of Basra, after he had arrayed his cavalry, ʿAlī said to his companions: "Do not hasten to fight these people until I have exhausted all options between myself, between God, and between them."

'"'So, he stood up in front of them and said: "O people of Basra! Do you find ʿAlī to be a tyrant?" They said: "No." He asked: "Then a breaker of oaths?" They said: "No." He said: "Then a man greedy for worldly wealth such that he has monopolized it for himself and his family and denied it to you, so that you have betrayed ʿAlī and broken your oath of allegiance to him?" They said: "No." He said: "Then did I punish you for crimes for which I pardoned others?" They said: "No." He said: "Then why did you break your oath of allegiance to

me but not to any others? I have looked at this from every side, but I find nothing except disbelief or the sword."

'"'Then ʿAlī turned to his companions and said: "Surely God—Blessed and Exalted!—has said in His Book: *But if they break their pledges after their having made a treaty and revile your religion, then fight the leaders of unfaith—indeed they have no pledges—maybe they will relinquish."* Then the Commander of the Faithful said: "By He who split the seed, brought forth the creatures, and chose Muḥammad for prophethood, they are the ones about whom this verse was revealed, and they have not been fought since this verse was revealed."'"'

Author's comments: Al-ʿAyyāshī also narrates this from Ḥanān ibn Sudayr from Imām al-Ṣādiq.

(31) In his *Amālī*, al-Mufīd narrates via a chain of narrators from Abū ʿUthmān, the muezzin of Banū Quṣayy. He said: 'I heard ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib's speech when Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr rebelled against him. He said: "God has excused me with regard to Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr. They pledged allegiance to me willingly and without compulsion, then they broke their pledge of allegiance to me without any justification." Then he recited the verse: *But if they break their pledges after their having made a treaty and revile your religion, then fight the leaders of unfaith—indeed they have no pledges—maybe they will relinquish.*'

Author's comments: A similar account is also narrated by al-ʿAyyāshī in his *Tafsīr* from Abū ʿUthmān the Muezzin, Abū al-Ṭufayl, and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. Shaykh al-Ṭūsī also narrates this from Abū ʿUthmān the Muezzin in his *Amālī*. In his tradition, Bakīr says: 'I asked Abū Jaʿfar (al-Bāqir) about this. He said: "The *shaykh* has spoken truthfully. This is what ʿAlī said. This is how it was."'

(32) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn Isḥāq and al-Bayhaqī in his *Dalā'il* narrate from Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam and al-Masrūr ibn Makhrama: 'In the peace treaty signed between the Messenger of God and the Quraysh on the Day of Ḥudaybiyya, it was stipulated that whoever wished to make a treaty or alliance with the Prophet was free to do so, and whoever wanted to make a treaty or alliance with the Quraysh was free to do so. The Khuzāʿa hastened forth and said: "We will make an alliance with Muḥammad." Then the Banū Bakr hastened forth and said: "We will make an alliance with the Quraysh." And this peace endured for about seventeen or eighteen months.

'Then, the Banū Bakr, who were allies of the Quraysh, launched an attack by night on the Khuzāʿa, who were allies of God's Messenger, at a well that belonged to them in the vicinity of Mecca known as al-Watīr. The Quraysh imagined that God's Messenger would not know what had happened under the cover of dark, so they supplied the Bakr with weapons and mounts and, because of the hatred they had towards the Prophet, they even participated directly in the attack on al-Watīr.

"Amr ibn Sālim rode to Medina with news of what had happened at al-Watīr and addressed the Messenger of God with the following verses of poetry:

"O Lord, I implore Muḥammad / by the oath of our father and his of old,
You were are sons for whom we provided the mother / then we submitted and never withdrew our hand,
So help us, God guide you / and call God's servants to our aid,
Among them the Messenger of God, sword-drawn / when he is wronged his face becomes overcast with anger,
In a great army heaving like the sea / surely the Quraysh have broken their promise to you,
And they have violated their solemn oath to you / and they tried to prevent me from warning you,
They claim that I will find no one to help us / and they are but a miserable few,
They attacked us by night in al-Watīr / and killed us as we bowed and prostrated."

'So the Messenger of God said: "We will come to your aid, O 'Amr ibn Sālim." Then, a cloud appeared in the sky and he said: "This cloud shall witness (our) assistance to the Banū Kaʿb." Then he ordered the people to muster for war (*jihād*) and to keep their departure a secret. He invoked God and asked Him to blind the Quraysh to his movements so that they might catch them by surprise in their homeland.'

Author's comments: This narration is reported in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, along with accounts from Mujāhid and 'Ikrima about the Quraysh's violation of the treaty of Ḥudaybiyya and their support for the Banū Bakr against the Messenger of God's allies the Khuzāʿa. They say that this was the occasion of revelation (*sabab al-nuzūl*) for the verses *Will you not make war on a people who broke their pledges... and heal the hearts of a faithful folk* (9:13–14). The

'*faithful folk*' in this instance are the Khuzāʿa.

If this is indeed accurate, then this would mean that the verse *Will you not make war on a people who broke their pledges...* and the three subsequent verses (9:13–16) were, in fact, revealed prior to the conquest of Mecca and, therefore, before the verses of repudiation.

However, regarding the account narrated by Ibn Isḥāq and al-Bayhaqī, even if we treat it as authentic because it is narrated by al-Masrūr ibn Makhrama, al-Masrūr's narration does not explicitly state that the verses in question were revealed in response to this event. Neither can we rely on the account from Mujāhid and 'Ikrima both because it has an incomplete chain of narrators and because the context of these verses does not lend credence to the idea that they were revealed before the conquest of Mecca. These verses are clearly connected to the verses from the beginning of the chapter and thus were revealed at the same time.

As for the verse, *who broke their pledges and resolved to expel the Messenger, and opened against you initially*, even if the description it contains is especially apt for the Quraysh, it could equally apply to the Quraysh's allies and neighbors who had not yet converted following the conquest of Mecca. Therefore, because of their solidarity with the Quraysh and relationship with them, the verse ascribes to them the same attributes as the Quraysh originally had.

Know also that there are various narrations in Shīʿī sources from the Prophet's Household that apply these verses to the circumstances surrounding the advent of Imām al-Mahdi. However, this is an example of extending the meaning of the verses to a new context (*al-jarī*).

On the Meaning of 'Treaty' (*'ahd*), its Types, and Some of its Rules

At the beginning of the sixth volume of this work, we touched on the meaning of the terms *'aqd* (agreement) and *'ahd* (treaty). Hence, we will begin by recapitulating what was previously stated, before discussing the various types of treaty and the rules pertaining to them in a new format divided into a number of sections.

First: On the origins of contracts in general

From the many discussions we have presented in this work so far, it should be clear to the reader that, over the course of his life, the human being always conceives of his actions and the material things that they are related to as actually existing objective realities and represents them as such. As such, he applies the same rules to them as he applies to objective reality, such as the

universal laws that govern the cosmos, in a manner that accords with his aims in life. For example, he might take a series of distinct units of sound, such as *z*, *y*, and *d*, and combine them in a specific form to produce the word *zayd*. He then posits that *zayd* refers to a human being who exists in objective reality and names him 'Zayd.' Then, whenever he wants to evoke the thought of this person in the mind of a listener, he utters the word 'Zayd' to him. Therefore, this word becomes a representation of the real being Zayd for him and, in doing this, he achieves his goal.

And when a person wishes to bring about some action that can only be performed by a group of people working together, then he will assemble a group and conceive of them as one body. Then, he will choose one of them to perform the role in relation to the rest of the group as the head does for the rest of the body, and he calls this person 'the head' of the group. At the same he conceives of the remainder of the group's members as the limbs of this body, referring to them as 'members' (member is an archaic term for 'limb' in English, just as the Arabic term *ʿaḍuww* can signify both the member of a group and a limb of a body). Then, he applies the same rules to the head of the group in the same way as he would to the head of a body, and likewise the same rules to the members of the group as he would to the limbs of a body.

With proper analysis, it is evident that all human ideas about society devolve to this, whether directly or through the mediation of other concepts and arguments. The same is true of the human being's personal thoughts with regard to his behavior and actions.

The human being treats making contracts, fulfilling agreements, and everything that pertains to oaths, vows, and pledges with the utmost seriousness. The primary reason for this is that the human being's overriding priority is to preserve his life, attain his goals, and secure the happiness that flows from his life taking its proper course.

So, whenever the human being attains something that he desires and gains power over it, he begins to enjoy it however is most appropriate, such as eating, drinking, and other such things, with the faculties of enjoyment with which he has been endowed. Likewise, he removes any obstacles to this enjoyment that he encounters on his way and believes that he is only able to accomplish this because of the power he has been granted.

One of the tools with which the human being has been furnished is his intellectual capital, through which he is able to plan his life, improve his livelihood, complete his work today, and make preparations for his work tomorrow. His actions, which are either directly concerned with acting upon matter

or ultimately devolve to this, are entirely dependent upon the extent of his power to act and his possession of everything that he needs in order to act. However, these actions also differ from one another in that some of them can be accomplished with little effort and in minimal time. For example, a hungry person comes upon some food and eats it. This does not require any power greater than the amount of time it takes to perform the act, nor does such an act require any preparations to be made or preliminary steps to be followed.

By contrast, the overwhelming majority of human social activities require considerable power to be expended in order to be realized, both at the time of their performance, as well as both before and, in some cases, even afterwards. This is because these acts have preliminary steps that must be traversed and preparations that must be made in advance of their coming to be. Very little of what the human being does in life is by accident. On the contrary, most matters of human existence require the ground to be prepared in order for them to come into being at the desired time.

One aspect of this preparation is to obtain and organise all of the necessary means for an action, and another is to remove any obstacles that might stand in its way. In short, the human being will not succeed in an action or see the results of his efforts unless he has ensured that all of the necessary ingredients for success are present and all of the barriers and impediments to it have been removed.

It is the realization of this truth that leads the human being to turn to his compatriots in order to ensure his own success, whether by seeking assistance from them to obtain the necessary ingredients for his success or ensuring that they will not act to thwart his efforts or prevent him from removing the barriers that stand before him.

For example, if a person is in need of clothes—even relatively simple garments made from a plain material such as cotton or wool—attaining this goal depends on numerous intermediary steps: Someone must spin the cotton or wool into thread, which someone must then weave into fabric, which someone must then tailor into clothes. And the spinner, the weaver, and the tailor all depend on someone to manufacture the tools they use in their respective trades. Without all of these steps being fulfilled, this person will not manage to find a set of clothes. Therefore, he needs his compatriots to help him in achieving his goal by wedding their efforts to his and not leaving him to his own devices, or else he will never succeed.

Equally, someone who wishes to settle on some land or take up residence in some house will not be able to reach his new home or live in it unless people

allow him to pass and do not prevent him from doing with his home as he sees fit.

It is these needs and requirements that lead the human being to recognise the importance of making agreements and signing contracts with others, as this allows him to join his actions to the actions of others in the same way as one connects two pieces of rope with one knot. These agreements also require him to act reciprocally by helping others achieve their goals through fulfilling his side of the agreement and not interfering with their activities.

This is the foundation upon which all the contracts and agreements concluded between people rest, including marriage, commerce, and the like thereof. These are both contracts and an example of covenants in a general sense, because the general meaning of a covenant is that a person should give a promise or a written contract to the effect that they will perform a certain beneficial action for the other party or that they will not hinder them from undertaking a certain action, whether for a specified period of time or indefinitely.

This general meaning of covenant or agreement is the focus of our present discussion and not specific forms of agreements with special names such as contracts of sale, marriage contracts, or other transactions, because this kind of agreement is not relevant to the subject we wish to address here. This is because each of them have their own specific rules and legal effects in different human societies. Instead, we want to discuss the general concept of a covenant, in the sense of an agreement one human makes with another to help or not to hinder them in various social goals, and the implications of this for human existence. For example, if one person agrees to pay another a specified sum of money annually in order to help him obtain certain needs or in exchange for certain benefits. Alternatively, he might agree not to interfere with his work or prevent him from attaining a specified goal for a certain period of time, or indefinitely. These sorts of agreements are not broken unless one of the two parties breaks them or unless both parties agree to set them aside.

Perhaps, in addition to signing an agreement, a person might also swear an oath. This means that the party in question links this agreement to something he considers sacred and inviolable, as if he is assigning the same sanctity and inviolability to the agreement itself. In this way, he provides a guarantee that he will fulfil his responsibilities as stipulated by the agreement, or else he robs the object of his oath of its sanctity and respect. One might say: 'By God, I will not betray you,' or 'by my life, I will support you,' or 'I swear that I will come to your aid.' In uttering such an oath, the person agrees that if they break their oath, it is as though they have voided the sanctity of their Lord,

the sanctity of their life, or the sanctity of their honor.

Or perhaps a covenant or agreement might be sealed through a pledge, whereby one party places his hand in the hand of another, symbolizing that he has given him the hand with which he will perform the act. In other words, he will not do anything that the other party dislikes, because he has placed his hand in theirs.

Second: The need of societies for contracts and agreements

These agreements and covenants are needed by both human beings and human societies alike, as a society is nothing more than a collection of individuals. Therefore, the life of a society is the sum of the lives of its members, and the actions of a society are the sum of the activities of its members. Equally, good and evil, benefit and harm, health and disease, progress and growth, uprightness and deviance, happiness and misery, and, ultimately, survival and collapse, all depend on the sum of these individuals.

Therefore, society is a macro-person, with similar needs and goals as the individuals that constitute its body politic. This means that the relationship between one society and another is akin to the relationship between one person and another. In securing these goals and engaging in activities, a society has similar needs to the human being in terms of security and safety. In fact, a society's needs for these things are even more acute than that of an individual, because the greater the agent, the greater the goal, and the greater the action needed to obtain it. Therefore, a society requires safety and security from its members lest it disintegrate or collapse, and it needs safety and security from other rival societies.

As the history of past nations and peoples has shown, and as we can ourselves observe from the condition of the nations of our own time, it is the nature of all human societies to form agreements with other societies in order to meet their political, economic, cultural and other needs. This is because no society can grow or develop except through cooperation with others like it and the absence of opposition from them.

Third: The validity of treaties in Islam and the obligation to respect them

Islam aims to reform the social life of human beings just as it aims to reform their individual lives. Therefore, it provides general laws addressing the collective life of human beings, such as the laws of *jihād*, defence, and fighting against aggressors and treaty breakers, as well as laws about peace, treaties, and agreements.

The kind of treaty that we are discussing at present is one that Islam has

endorsed fully and without qualification. As such, violating it without justification is considered one of the gravest sins imaginable, unless of course one side has already violated it and the other is merely responding in kind. In the Qur'an, God orders people to uphold their agreements and contracts and condemns those who violate them in the strongest possible terms. He says: *O you who have faith! Keep your agreements* (5:1); *But as for those who break Allah's compact after having pledged it solemnly... it is such on whom the curse will lie, and for them will be the ills of the (ultimate) abode* (13:25); and *fulfil the covenants; indeed all covenants are accountable* (17:34), and more besides.

God has not permitted the breaking of treaties or agreements except where there is a valid justification. For example, if one side violates a treaty through aggression or wrongdoing, or if it is likely to be violated because they have put it aside, then there is no problem with likewise disregarding the treaty, nor is this blameworthy. God says: *And if you fear treachery from a people, break off with them in a like manner. Indeed Allah does not like the treacherous* (8:58). Therefore, God permits the breaking of a treaty when one fears the treachery of the other side. However, He requires that the Muslims inform the other side of the treaty's termination and does not permit them to launch a surprise attack: *break off with them in a like manner*. It is obligatory to inform them that the treaty has been revoked to avoid being accused of perfidious behavior.

He says: *A repudiation by Allah and His Messenger to the polytheists with whom you had made a treaty: Travel in the land for four months* (9:1–2). Notice also that God does not simply repudiate the treaty but gives them a period of grace in which to consider their situation and decide on what course of action they would like to take. If they wish, they can believe and be saved, or if they do not, they can be fought and destroyed. One of the positive effects of giving the Arab idolaters a deadline was that they chose to believe rather than fight.

And God completes this grace towards them by issuing the following ordinance after the repudiation: *If any of the polytheists seeks asylum from you, grant him asylum until he hears the Word of Allah. Then convey him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know* (9:6).

He also exempts those who have adhered faithfully to their treaties: *How shall the polytheists have any treaty with Allah and His Messenger?! (Barring those with whom you made a treaty at the Holy Mosque; so long as they are steadfast with you, be steadfast with them. Indeed Allah loves the Godwary). How? For if they get the better of you, they will observe toward you neither kinship nor covenant. They please you with their mouths while their hearts spurn you; and most of them are transgressors* (9:7–8). Notice that God explains why

the Muslims should be steadfast with those idolaters who are steadfast with them—because this is part of Godwariness (*taqwā*), which is the very essence of that to which the religion of Islam is calling mankind, for God loves those who are Godwary. This rationale for upholding treaties is not bound to a particular context but remains valid until the Day of Judgement.

God also says: *So should anyone aggress against you, assail him in the manner he assailed you* (2:194), and *Ill feeling for a people should not lead you, because they barred you from (entering) the Holy Mosque, to transgress. Cooperate in piety and Godwariness, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression, and be wary of Allah* (5:2).

As for being the first to violate a treaty without the other side providing any justification for this, this is forbidden in the upright religion. We have already encountered the verses of the Qur'an: *so long as they are steadfast with you, be steadfast with them* and *but do not transgress. Indeed Allah does not like transgressors* (2:190).

These were the principles that guided the actions of the Prophet throughout his life. He made a treaty with the Banū Qaynuqāʿ, the Banū Qurayẓa, and other Jewish tribes, and he did not violate the protocols of those treaties except after the other side did so first. He made a treaty with the Quraysh at Ḥudaybiyya and he did not break this treaty until they broke it by supporting the Banū Bakr against the Khuzāʿa, who were allies of the Prophet, while the Banū Bakr were allies of the Quraysh.

As for violating the terms of a treaty without the other side violating them first, there is no justification for this in Islam, even if adhering to the treaty is prejudicial to the interests of the Muslims or exposes them to some harm, even if they are able to defend their interests with force or can find some excuse to circumvent their agreements in such a way that they will not be subject to blame or reproach. However, Islam has not allowed them to act in such a way, for the criterion here is not their material interests but the truth, and the truth has only ever harmed those that strayed from it and sought something other than it.

Fourth: Comparing Islam to non-religious societies in terms of respect for treaties and agreements

Human societies, especially ones which are highly developed—albeit non-religious—have no higher aim or purpose for coming together or following their established traditions except to enjoy the benefits of material life to the greatest degree possible. As a result, they do not need to do anything other than uphold the practical laws that facilitate their various pursuits in life.

Therefore, it is clear that, in such an environment, there is no value for spiritual matters save for the extent to which they relate to and support the aims of material existence. Spiritual virtues such as honesty, chivalry, compassion, and the like thereof have no value unless they bring tangible benefits to society and so long as they do not cause any inconvenience to those in power if they do not. Therefore, there is no impetus to uphold them. In fact, the impetus is to discard them.

This is why official bodies and governing officials in such societies do not believe that they have any duty or function other than to safeguard the society's material interests. Hence, they only enter into treaties and agreements based on their current interests. They measure their own strength and needs, measure those of the other side, consider any other relevant factors, and draw up an agreement based on these calculations.

So long as these power calculations remain unchanged, the treaty will remain unchanged. However, if one side or the other gains the upper hand over the other, they will invalidate the treaty on the basis of some pretext or allegations manufactured and contrived for that purpose. Indeed, they only offer these as excuses in order to maintain the façade of adhering to international laws, and they do not see any consequences to breaking these laws worthy of consideration except those that threaten their own material interests or those of the society that they govern. Were this not the case, they would violate their agreements at the slightest excuse.

Such societies are not prevented by morality or spirituality from lying, treachery, or infringing on the other party's rights, as none of these things hold any value to them; they only consider how to safeguard the material interests of their own society and how best to achieve its goals. And if the reader pays close attention to conflicts that occurred between different societies, both recently and in history, especially to the conflicts that are taking place in the current era, they will note that there are many treaties and agreements that have been broken in the way we have just described.

By contrast, Islam does not consider the material life of the human being to be their real life, nor does it consider the enjoyment of material benefits to be true happiness. On the contrary, it sees real life as residing in the union of matter with spirit and finds the attainment of true happiness in securing felicity in both this world and the next. Therefore, it must promulgate laws for regulating life in accordance with the human being's God-given nature (*fiṭra*) and not only based on what the human being sees as profitable for himself. And it must issue a call to follow the truth and be guided by it rather than

following one's own desires and obeying the whims of the majority that are founded on their own emotions and prejudices. God says: *So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of Allah according to which He originated mankind. There is no altering Allah's creation; that is the upright religion* (30:30); *It is He who has sent His Apostle with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it prevail over all religions, though the polytheists should be averse* (9:33); *Rather We have brought them the truth* (23:90); *Had the Truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth would have surely fallen apart (along) with those who are in them* (23:71).

In order for a virtuous society to exist, it is necessary that it adopts true beliefs, virtuous morals, and good deeds together. Matter cannot suffice without spirit, but neither can spirit survive without matter. Therefore, such a society must adhere to human virtues, whether these are materially beneficial or not, and avoid vices, whether these are materially harmful or not, because that is what it means to follow the truth. And none will truly come to harm except those who stray from the middle path or overstep the bounds of the truth.

Based on this, we can understand why God repudiates the treaty of the idolaters, because they have already repudiated it through their actions. However, His mercy also leads him to grant them four months grace and to enjoin the Muslims to uphold the treaties of those idolaters who upheld theirs, for events have weakened them to the point that they are humbled before the might of Islam. Equally, God commands His Prophet, should he fear the treachery of a people, to repudiate his treaty with them, so long as he informs them of this fact, as God does not like treachery or deceit.

On Attributing Actions to Higher Causes

About the verse, *Make war on them so that Allah may punish them by your hands* (9:14), we have already discussed on several occasions in this commentary how philosophical arguments show that just as phenomena can be attributed to their immediate causes (*asbāb qarība*), they can also be attributed to their ultimate causes (*asbāb qaṣwā*), which are the causes of their immediate causes. Therefore, these phenomena can be simultaneously described as the effects of these ultimate causes and as the effects of their immediate causes. For example, movement depends upon the action of a mover, and the movement of this mover depends upon its mover. This is like a series of cogs, where the first cog is moved by the second, which is moved by the third in turn.

Therefore, an action is related to the agent that caused it, but it is also related to its agent's cause, and this second relationship is not distinct or

independent from the first. This means that the immediate cause's relationship to the higher cause is like that of a tool. In other words, it plays a purely intermediary role in bringing about the effect, in the sense that it does not act independently of its own cause, and if its cause did not exist, neither it nor its effect would exist either.

However, this does not mean that the intermediary agent is unaware of what it does, or that it does not do it of its own free will and volition. On the contrary, it is a conscious agent (*fā'il shā'ir*), but it did not endow itself with this consciousness. Rather, its own cause is what gave it this consciousness, as it created both the intermediary agent and its consciousness. The same is true of its free-will, but the free-willed agent did not endow itself with this. Rather, the cause that brought it into being also gave it free-will. And just as an effect depends upon a cause, even when there is neither consciousness nor free-will, it depends upon the cause of its cause in exactly the same way. Equally, a conscious or free-willed action depends upon its cause (the conscious and free-willed agent), and it depends upon the cause of its cause (which brought into being the conscious and free-willed agent) in exactly the same way.

In other words, the cause of the conscious or free-willed agent wanted the conscious or free-willed agent to produce the desired effect through its conscious action or of its own volition. Therefore, the higher cause not only desired the intermediary to perform the action, it also desired the intermediary to perform the action consciously and of its own free will. It is not the case that it merely wanted the intermediary to perform the action, whether it was of its own volition or not.

It is based on this reality that human beings proceed, according to their intuitive understanding, to attribute a phenomenon to its ultimate cause in the same way they attribute it to its immediate cause, in that it is an effect that emanates from it. One might say: 'So-and-so built a house and dug a well,' when it was the builder who built the house and the well-digger who dug the well. Equally, one might say: 'The king had so-and-so lashed, and so-and-so executed, and so-and-so imprisoned, and went to war with such-and-such a people,' when it was the scourger who delivered the whipping, the executioner who put someone to death, the gaoler who imprisoned someone, and the soldiers who went to war. One might also say: 'X burned the clothes of Y,' even though the clothes were burned by fire, or 'X cured Y of his illness,' when it was the medicine he took that cured him and X only prescribed it to him. In all of these cases, it is the order or request of the ultimate cause that is said to have brought about the action of the immediate cause, hence the action of the

immediate cause is attributed to the ultimate cause. However, even though the ultimate cause did not directly perform the action, the attribution of it to him is nevertheless genuine (*ḥaqīqa*) and not merely figurative (*majāz*).

Some grammarians and others argue that all of this falls within the scope of figurative speech because it is possible to negate the action from the ultimate cause. They say that the owner of the house did not lay a single brick in its construction, rather it was the builder who did this. However, they are only looking at action insofar as it emanated from its immediate cause, when it is self-evident that such direct action (*mubāshara*) is the function of the immediate cause, and we do not dispute this. Instead, what we are arguing is that we can conceive of this action as depending upon a higher cause as well. That is why we say that just as the immediate cause performs the act, the higher cause acts upon the immediate cause and, in doing so, causes him to perform that act.

It is this point that forces them to distinguish between different kinds of actions and attribute some of these to both the immediate and ultimate cause jointly, while assigning others to only the immediate cause who undertakes the act itself. Therefore, they say that those acts whose very concept implies direct involvement with their performance can only be ascribed to the immediate cause. For example, eating in the sense of chewing and swallowing, drinking in the sense of sipping and swallowing, or sitting down. Hence, when a master orders his servant to eat food, or drink water, or sit on a chair, one cannot say that the master ate, drank, or sat, rather one must say that the servant ate, drank, and sat. On the other hand, one can say that the master disposed of some property or gave money to someone even if he was not the one who performed the action itself.

As for the actions where the performance of the act itself and the physical movements made by the immediate cause are not of primary importance, these are attributed to both the immediate and the ultimate causes. For example, acts such as killing, imprisoning, giving life, causing death, giving, showing kindness, and treating with respect are attributed both to the immediate cause and the ultimate cause equally. In fact, it could be argued that their association with the ultimate cause is more powerful than their association with the immediate one, as if the higher cause is also higher in existence, authority, and power.

These are the fruits of philosophical discussions on this topic, which correspond to human intuitions. The Qur'an also confirms this in the clearest possible way, when God says in the aforementioned verse: *Make war on them so that Allah may punish them by your hands and humiliate them, and help you against them, and heal the hearts of a faithful folk, and remove rage*

from their hearts (9:14–15). This attributes the punishment inflicted upon the idolaters by the hands of the faithful to God Himself, because it makes those hands God's implements (*by your hands*).

This is akin to the verse: *Allah has created you and whatever you do* (37:96), as the meaning of *whatever you do* either refers to the idols which they would make from stone, wood, or metal, in which case this refers to the material that the human beings have worked into idols and it attributes these works to the Creator in the same way as it does to the humans that made them; or this verse refers to the actions of human beings themselves, in which case the meaning is clear.

Another similar verse is: *And who created all the kinds and made for you the ships and the cattle such as you ride* (43:12), as it attributes the manufacture of ships to God, while it is evident that ships are something manufactured by men.

Note that all of this applies to actions being performed by conscious and free-willed agents. When it comes to those actions that do not depend upon either consciousness and free-will, such as involuntary actions, there are countless verses in the Qur'an (so many that we need not enumerate them, in fact) that attribute them to God Himself. For example, He is the one who revives the earth, brings forth vegetation, splits the seed, sends down rain from the skies, causes rivers to flow, sets ships in motion across the sea by His command, and so on.

There is no contradiction in any of these examples between attributing these phenomena to God and simultaneously attributing them to other natural agents and causes. This is because these different causes are arranged vertically and in sequence rather than horizontally and in parallel, so it is not as though God and other causes are acting on these phenomena independently of one another. Instead, God is acting upon these phenomena through these intermediate causes, and therefore there is no problem with identifying multiple causes for them.

As we have seen in our previous discussions, materialists find it difficult to understand how theists can attribute phenomena such as floods, earthquakes, and disease epidemics to God while today we know that there are natural causes for all of these. This stems from their confusion of a vertical hierarchy of causes with a horizontal array of them. They imagine that attributing such phenomena to natural causes refutes the contents of the Qur'an and the beliefs of the theists, who attribute such phenomena to the First Cause, to whom all matters ultimately return.

At the same time, the Ashʿarī and Muʿtazilī theologians have a strange debate about the meaning of the previous verse, *Make war on them so that Allah may punish them by your hands* (9:14), and other verses like it. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī has discussed this at length in his *Tafsīr*, and we will summarize it below.

According to al-Rāzī, the Ashʿarīs claim that the verse, *Make war on them so that Allah may punish them by your hands*, shows that human actions are created by God and that, therefore, human beings do not have free-will but are predetermined in their deeds. This is because the verse makes clear that God is the one who will punish the idolaters through killing some of them and wounding others with the hands of the faithful. This shows that the hands of the faithful are no different to the swords and spears that they wield; they are mere instruments with no say in the matter. It is God who acts and the acquisition of these acts (*kasb*), which is the criterion for moral responsibility (*taklīf*) is, therefore, an empty term.

What is more, this verse provides a stronger basis for the predestinarian thesis than the verse *and you did not throw when you threw, rather it was Allah who threw* (8:17), as this verse attributes the act of throwing to the Prophet, even if it does then negate it from him by attributing agency to God instead. On the other hand, the verse, *Make war on them so that Allah may punish them by your hands*, affirms that it is God who punishes them and makes the hands of the faithful instruments of this divine action without any say in it.

The Muʿtazilī theologian al-Jubāʾī responds by arguing that if God punishing the disbelievers with the hands of the faithful meant this, it could also be said that He punishes the faithful with the hands of the disbelievers, or that He rejected the prophets with their tongues, and that he cursed the faithful and reviled them with their mouths, because God created all of that. However, we cannot say this. Therefore, we know that God does not create the actions of human beings in this manner, rather they create their own actions. Based on this, when the verse attributes the punishment of the idolaters to God, this is meant in a broader sense. After all, this only transpires as a result of His command and His grace. This is in the same vein that He attributes all acts of obedience and virtuous deeds to Himself because they take place through His commands and His assistance.

Al-Rāzī responds to al-Jubāʾī's point by saying that the Ashʿarīs agree with al-Jubāʾī's conclusion that their argument entails assigning bad deeds to God as well and they agree with this doctrine in principle, even if they do not necessarily express it as al-Jubāʾī has out of respect for God.

The discussions we have presented about these ideas above should be sufficient for the reader to discern the truth of the matter in this context, while also making clear the errors that both of these theological schools have fallen into.

As regards the Ashʿarī position, they are compelled to adopt it because they deny the existence of any causal relation between created things and say that God is the sole and immediate cause for all things in existence. Therefore, there is no cause in existence, whether independent of God or dependent upon Him, save God. According to them, the causal relationship that human beings observe between different created things is merely the appearance of causality. In reality, even this appearance of causality only exists because God wills it so: It is a habit that God follows in His creation, but it is not something He is bound to observe. Therefore, what we call causes and effects are all caused by God (and this is genuine causation). As for the causation that we observe between created causes and effects, there is no genuine causation here, merely the co-occurrence of two phenomena in all or the majority of cases.

However, this position entails the denial of the very idea of causality, even the causality that they have affirmed for God. After all, if all the things in existence share the same relation to one another, without any distinction between causes and effects, then there is no basis on which the human being can posit the notion of causality. Therefore, if he cannot conceive of causality, he cannot attribute it to God in the first place.

On the contrary, though, the human being expects phenomena to cause other phenomena, and is certain that the same actions will produce the same results time and again. He bases his entire life on the principle that effects follow from causes, irrespective of whether or not he believes in a Creator. This is not possible unless the human being innately believes in the principle of causality, and if it was possible for human nature to accept a denial of this principle and assert in its place the idea that all phenomena happen by pure coincidence, then his entire life would unravel because his mental or physical efforts would be rendered meaningless. Moreover, there would be no way for him to deduce the existence of a First Cause from the chains of causality that he observes amongst material phenomena.

The Qur'an itself bases its explanations on the assumption that causation is real. It assigns every good deed to God and negates the ascription of any evil deeds or sins to Him. It names Him with every beautiful name and describes Him with every good attribute. It negates from Him all mockery, absurdity, idleness, and frivolity. None of this is possible unless causality is real, and we have already explained previously how to reconcile God's absolute power

with human free-will.

Some materialists, and especially the proponents of dialectical materialism, draw the same conclusion as the Ashʿarī theologians by affirming determinism and negating human free-will. The only difference between the materialists and the Ashʿarīs is that the latter base their position on the principle of divine occasionalism, namely that God alone is the cause of all things and that, therefore, there is no causation or free-will for the human being. By contrast, the materialists argue that human actions are merely the result of the sum of phenomena leading up to the action, and there is no human volition or free-will involved in this process. Therefore, all human actions are predetermined and prefigured by material laws.

However, what escapes them is the fact that the relationship of a human action to the sum of phenomena that necessitated it is that of an effect to a sufficient cause (*ʿilla tāmma*, or 'complete cause'), such that it does not depend on its existence for anything beyond them. Therefore, when all of these phenomena exist, the effect necessarily comes into being as well. As for the individual components of this complete cause—each of which is a necessary cause (*ʿilla nāqiṣ*, 'incomplete cause') but not a sufficient one—their relationship to the effect is one of contingency rather than necessity, as its existence depends on the presence of other factors beyond them. Therefore, the effect will not come into being if only some of the components of its cause are present.

For their existence, human actions depend upon the person, their volition, and innumerable other conditions, such as time, place, and materials. Therefore, the relationship between the action and all of these conditions, assuming that they obtain, is one of necessity. However, the relationship of the action to the human being alone, or the human being combined with their volition to perform the actions, is a relationship of an effect to a necessary cause, which is one of contingency but not necessity. This is because the voluntary actions of a human being emanate from his or her free-will. In other words, it is possible for them to perform the action or to abstain from it. If they perform it, then they do so based on their own volition, and if they do not perform it, this is also based on their own volition. However, whenever the action takes place, it does so necessarily because all of the conditions necessary for its existence in objective reality have been met, including human free-will.

Therefore, the materialists confuse two different kinds of modal relation: The necessary (*wujūb*) relation that exists between an action and all of the components of its sufficient cause taken as a whole, and the contingent (*imkān*) relation that exists between an action and each individual component

of its sufficient cause taken separately. The latter includes human free-will.

As for the Mu'tazila, their argument is that if God can be assigned the actions of the faithful, such as punishing the idolaters, this not only reduces them to mere passive instruments. What is more, it means that when the faithless persecute the faithful, or deny the prophets, or curse the believers, this can also be attributed to God. They say this is definitively false and, therefore, conclude that the actions of human beings are created by themselves rather than by God.

However, while their premise is correct, the conclusion they draw from it is false, as this argument does not entail that human beings create their own actions and that these actions have no relationship with God whatsoever. This is because, as we have discussed, such actions can be assigned to God by virtue of the same relationship by which they are assigned to the people that perform them. This is because while they are the cause of the actions, God is the cause of their existence. Therefore, they are the immediate cause from whom the actions emanate, but God is the ultimate cause who brought them into being. These two relations are, in fact, a single relation with multiple facets: Immediate and ultimate, direct and indirect. This does not imply any over determination, meaning that two causes have independently produced the same effect where either one would have sufficed on its own, because these two causes are related vertically and hierarchically rather than horizontally and in parallel.

Now, if someone was to argue: 'But this doesn't solve the problem of both good deeds and bad deeds, and faith and infidelity all being assigned to God!'

We would respond by saying that our thesis only attributes the fact of their existence to God, but the direct action that produced these deeds in the form of movement in a particular time and place—for example, in the case of marriage or adultery, or eating permissible food or forbidden food—came from the human being, because he is the material entity that served as the locus of these movements. The one who created this being with the ability to move and act (while not being in motion Himself) is God, and this moving being came into existence because all the necessary causes and conditions of his existence were met. Therefore, God is not attributed with the actions of this being, such as marriage, adultery, or any other action he undertakes, in the same way as He is not described as 'moving' just because He has created something with the power of movement.

Of course, there are general categories of action that require neither movement or matter, in which case there is no problem with attributing them to

both man and God. For example, guidance and misguidance (so long as the latter does not imply that God misguided someone in the first instance) or punishment and putting to trial. Therefore, when a believer kills an idolater, this is a divine punishment for the idolater. On the other hand, when an idolater kills a believer, this is a divine trial for the believer. Furthermore, the latter is a good thing, as it gives the believer the opportunity to earn God's reward. And so on, and so forth.

As for what I claimed previously, namely that in adopting this as their counter-argument the Muʿtazila encountered the same problem as the Ashʿarīs, namely that they would be unable to deduce God's existence, the explanation of this is as follows: If there existed in the world some phenomenon that was brought into being by a sole cause with no cause of its own to act upon it, this would mean that there could be phenomena in existence that depend only upon their causes, and that these causes do not depend on anything else beyond themselves for their existence. Now, it is possible for a cause to disappear and the effect to remain. Therefore, it would be possible to assign every phenomenon in the cosmos to a cause other than the Necessary Being. In fact, one could assign the existence of the entirety of the cosmos to a cosmos that came before it and brought it into being. This previous cosmos has since ceased to exist. This would mean that everything in the cosmos produces everything else without entailing an infinite regress of causes, because at no point is there a never-ending chain of causes in existence. Therefore, it would be impossible to deduce God's existence from such a conception of causality.

There are many other problems evident with the Muʿtazila's thesis, which have been highlighted elsewhere. We have already discussed the relationship of the cosmos to God in the sixth part of this work, and some of what we said there is beneficial to our present discussion.

How can any monotheistic Muslim affirm that there is a creator alongside God in the literal sense of the word 'creator,' when God has explicitly stated: *That is Allah, your Lord, the creator of all things, there is no Allah except Him* (40:62). This is a principle that has been repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'an. However, it is possible to attribute responsibility for human actions to human beings without cutting them off from God causally. On the contrary, these verses illustrate that human actions are ultimately caused by God, even while reason tells us that the moral responsibility for these actions lies with human beings.

In conclusion, human actions are related both to their immediate causes (the human beings that perform them) and to their ultimate cause (God) in

a way that does not infringe upon God's divinity. God says: *To these and to those—to all We extend the bounty of your Lord, and the bounty of your Lord is not confined* (17:20).

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Verses 17–24

This passage of the Qur'an explains that a person's deeds are only alive and pleasing to God if they emanate from genuine belief in God, the Messenger, and the Last Day. If they do not, then they are futile and will not convey the one who does them to happiness. And one of the requirements of true faith is to only give your loyalty, love, and affection for the sake of God and His Messenger.

The connectedness of the verses that make up this passage with one another is evident. However, their connection to the previous section of verses is not as clear, and the theories proposed by commentators concerning the connection between the two passages are often somewhat forced.

مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يَعْمُرُوا مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ شَاهِدِينَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ بِالْكُفْرِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ وَفِي النَّارِ هُمْ خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

(9:17) ***It is not for the polytheists to maintain Allah's mosques while they are witness to their own unfaith. Their works have failed, and they shall remain in the Fire.***

The verb *ʿamāra* (to maintain, make prosperous, or dwell in) is the opposite of *kharāb* (to ruin). One would say *ʿamara al-arḍ* (he developed the land) if someone erected a structure upon it and *ʿamara al-bayt* (he maintained the house) if he looked after the part of it for which he was responsible. The verb *taʿmīr* is derived from the same root and carries the same meaning. Meanwhile, the cognate *ʿumr* (life) signifies the maintenance of the body by the spirit, while *ʿumra* (a pilgrimage to Mecca) denotes a visit to the House of God, because such pilgrimages cause Mecca to flourish and prosper.

Meanwhile, *masjid* (mosque) is a noun of place (*ism makān*) that denotes a place in which prostration (*sajda*) is performed. For example, a house which is built for people to bow down to God inside of it is a *masjid*, as are the parts of the body that are placed against the ground when people prostrate—the forehand, the palms, the knees, and the toes.

The phrase, *it is not for the polytheists...* (mā kāna li al-mushrikīn), denies the idolaters the right to maintain the places in which God is worshipped. The

use of the verb *kāna* (lit. 'was') shows that, in fact, they never had the right to maintain them, renovate them, or visit them. This phrasing is similar to the verses: *It is not for a prophet to take captives...* (8:67) and *it is not for a prophet to breach his trust* (3:161).

The verb *ʿamāra* in this verse denotes maintenance, meaning carrying out repairs and renovations to a structure as needed in order to keep it in functioning order, rather than *ʿamāra* in the sense of visitation or pilgrimage. Equally, the term *mosques* refers to the Holy Sanctuary in Mecca and every other place dedicated to the worship of God. Hence, we know that *ʿamāra* here refers to maintenance, because there is no *ʿumra* pilgrimage to any mosque besides the Holy Sanctuary, and because the terms *ʿumra* and *ziyāra* are not used in the Qur'an to describe visiting a mosque for the purpose of worshipping God therein, instead it opts for the verb *dukhūl* (to enter).

We can further see that the intended meaning of *ʿamāra* is maintaining the physical structure of the Holy Sanctuary rather than pilgrimage to it, because we read in the subsequent verse: *Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims and the maintenance of the Holy Mosque...* (9:19). At the same time, the mosques referred to in this verse are any houses that are built for the sake of God and used as venues for his worship. However, the context of the verse suggests that it is focused specifically on the Holy Sanctuary, as indicated by the alternate recitation (*qirāʾa*): 'To maintain God's mosque,' with mosque appearing in the singular rather than the plural.

There is no problem with the Qur'an using the plural form while the primary intent of the verse is to explain the ruling for a particular case within that category, because the criteria for this ruling are general in scope and the rationale for the ruling given in the verse is not particular to the Holy Sanctuary. Therefore, the meaning is: 'It is not for them to maintain the Holy Sanctuary, because it is a mosque, and this is a rule that applies to all mosques.'

...while they are witness to their own unfaith: Their being witness to their own faith means to openly acknowledge it in word or deed, for example by verbally stating their disbelief or by worshipping idols and making a show of their disbelief. All of this bears witness to their unfaith.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'The idolaters are not permitted, and nor do they have any right, to carry out repairs on the Holy Sanctuary, just as they are not allowed for any other mosque, so long as they testify to their own disbelief in word or deed.

Their works have failed, and they shall remain in the Fire: This provides the underlying rationale for the above injunction, which is why it

appears as a separate statement.

Their works have failed means that their deeds are futile and ineffective. Anyone who performs an action does so in order to achieve some desired outcome; if their works have failed, this means that will not produce the desired outcome, therefore there is no reason to allow them to perform them anymore. This is because acts of worship, such as maintaining God's mosques, are performed in order to win God's pleasure and attain paradise, and failed works will never lead to paradise or eternal bliss.

...and they shall remain in the Fire shows that their ultimate destination is not happiness or paradise, but hell. This is as if to say: 'Those are the ones whose acts of worship will never convey them to paradise, rather they will be in hell eternally. They will never attain happiness, but will only be given everlasting misery.'

This verse highlights two subtle principles about divine legislation:

First, a permissible act (*jā'iz*) in its most general sense—encompassing obligatory (*wājib*), recommended (*mustaḥabb*), and legally neutral (*mubāḥ*) acts—is an action that has a beneficial effect on its doer. After all, no law is promulgated arbitrarily or without reason in the religion of Islam. This principle is both supported by reason and the natural law that operates throughout the world that no deed is done save for a benefit it brings to its doer.

Second, that an action is considered permissible because God has already given the right to the doer to perform it and has not expressly prohibited it.

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

(9:18) ***Only those shall maintain Allah's mosques who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and maintain the prayer and give the zakāt, and fear no one except Allah. They, hopefully, will be among the guided.***

Based on the context of the verse, the marker of exclusivity *innamā* (only) is used here to signify a separating restriction (*qaṣr al-ifrād*)—in that it restricts the right to maintain God's mosques to people with the qualities specified—as if someone imagined that both believers and idolaters had the right to maintain God's mosques. The verse restricts this to only the believers. While the statement, *only those shall maintain...*, is phrased as a declarative sentence, it is evidently meant as a speech act (*inshā'*) to legislate a right and a permission.

Hence, God has stipulated that the right and permission to maintain His mosques only belongs to those who believe in Him and the Last Day. This excludes the idolaters, as while they believe in God (even though they associate partners with Him), they do not believe in the Last Day. Therefore, this verse establishes the right to maintain God's mosques exclusively for the faithful.

To this, He also adds the requirement, *and maintain the prayer and give the zakāt, and fear no one except Allah*. This is because this verse was revealed in the context of explaining who will benefit from their deeds and, therefore, who has the right to maintain God's mosques. Anyone who abandons the practical requirements (*furūʿ*) of the religion, especially the two pillars of prayer and *zakāt*, has disbelieved in God's signs and will not benefit from his professed belief in God and the Last Day, even if he is a Muslim and does not deny the teachings of Islam with his tongue. Of course, if he denies the teachings of Islam with his tongue, he is a disbeliever and not a Muslim.

The reason that God singles out prayer and *zakāt* for mention here is because they are two pillars of Islam that can never be neglected for any reason.

From what we have said about the context of the verse, it also becomes apparent why God adds the stipulation that they *fear no one except Allah*. This is because fear (*khashya*) in the religious sense is worship, as opposed to fear in the instinctive sense, which is something only those intimate servants brought nearest to God, like the Prophets, do not experience. God says: *such as deliver the messages of Allah and fear Him, and fear no one except Allah* (33:39).

The reason why God refers to worship (*ʿibāda*) as fear (*khashya*) is that people most commonly worship and venerate a deity for two reasons: Fear of their wrath and hope for their mercy. And hope for their mercy translates into fear of being denied it, which would be because of their wrath. Therefore, anyone who worships God or worships an idol has been drawn to worship them because they are afraid of their wrath or afraid of being denied their blessings and mercy. This means that worship is a symbol of fear and fear is the embodiment of worship, such that fear and worship both imply the existence of the other. This is why God uses the word fear to signify worship. Hence, the meaning of this phrase is: 'and worship no deity except God.'

They, hopefully, will be among the guided: Meaning that those who believe in God and the Last Day and do not worship anyone except God, it is hoped that they will be rightly guided. Now, this hope inheres either in the souls of those described in the verse or in the audience who are hearing this description; it does not inhere in God, because hope is a concept that cannot be applied to God, as hope can only emanate from a state of ignorance about

the future and whether or not the thing hoped for will come to pass.

Now, anyone who truly believes in God and the Last Day and then confirms this belief through their acts of worship has assuredly been guided. So, why does the Qur'an treat their guidance as hoped for rather than as a certainty? This is because being guided once or twice does not mean that the person is 'among the guided' (*min al-muhtadīn*) in the sense that they are in a permanent state of being guided and adhering to guidance. After all, just because someone displays a trait once or twice, this does not mean that this trait has become part of who they are. Those who believe in God and the Last Day and do good deeds have all been guided, but it is still hoped that this guidance will become an integral part of who they are, for this has not yet come to pass.

Therefore, from this verse we can see that there is no right or permission to maintain God's mosques for anyone who is not a Muslim. This is because the idolaters do not truly believe in God and do not believe in the Last Day at all, while the belief of the People of the Book in God is not recognized as genuine belief by the Qur'an: *Those who disbelieve in Allah and His apostles and seek to separate Allah from His apostles, and say, 'We believe in some and disbelieve in some' and seek to take a way in between—it is they who are truly faithless* (4:150–51), and: *Fight those who do not have faith in Allah nor believe in the Last Day, nor forbid what Allah and His Apostle have forbidden, nor practise the true religion, from among those who were given the Book* (9:29).

أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

(9:19) ***Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims and the maintenance of the Holy Mosque as similar in worth to someone who has faith in Allah and believes in the Last Day and strives in the way of Allah?***

The verbal noun *siqāya* (providing water) follows the same vowel pattern as the words *ḥikāya* (story), *jināya* (crime), and *nikāya* (spite). It is conjugated *saqā, yasqī, siqāya*.

Siqāya can also be used to signify the place into which water is poured and the container from which it is poured. For example, see the verse from the story

of Joseph: *he put the drinking-cup* (siqāya) *into his brother's saddlebag* (12:70).

According to the historical reports that have come down to us, providing water to the Hajj pilgrims was a source of pride and distinction in the pre-Islamic era. These reports say that Quṣayy ibn Kilāb (one of the Prophet's ancestors) brought fresh water from the wells by camel and stored it in leather basins that were kept in the shadow of the Kaʿba, from which they would distribute it to pilgrims. When Quṣayy passed away, he entrusted this responsibility to his son ʿAbd Manāf, and it was handed down from one generation to the next until it was inherited by the Prophet's uncle, ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib. Even now, the place from whence ʿAbbās would distribute water to the pilgrims in both the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods is known as Siqāyat al-ʿAbbās. It is located about forty cubits to the south of the Well of Zamzam, and today a structure has been erected upon it that is also known by this name.

In any case, the meaning of the term *siqāya* in the above verse is 'to give water,' and this is reflected in the fact that it is mentioned alongside the maintenance of the Holy Mosque in Mecca.

This verse appears to compare the roles of maintaining the Holy Mosque and giving water to the pilgrims with someone who believes in God and the Last Day and who strives in His way. However, it is meaningless to argue about whether or not a person is equal to an action, like maintaining the mosque or giving water, as you must compare like with like: a person with a person or a deed with a deed. Therefore, commentators have had to argue that what the verse contains an implicit meaning, namely: '*Do you regard* those who provide *water to Hajj pilgrims and maintain the Holy Mosque as similar in worth to someone who has faith in Allah and believes in the Last Day and strives in the way of Allah?*' In this way, they resolve this apparent disparity.

However, we would argue that it is more appropriate to look at the conditions being set in the course of this comparison. On the one hand are giving water to the pilgrims and maintaining the Holy Mosque. These are mentioned by themselves and independent of any additional condition being stipulated. On the other hand are belief in God and the Last Day and striving in the way of God. Or, to put it another way: Striving in the way of God, while believing in Him.

This comparison suggests that what the verse wishes to call attention to—'*providing of water to Hajj pilgrims and the maintenance of the Holy Mosque*'—is the performance of these deeds without believing in God. This reading is supported by the verse's coda: *and Allah does not guide the wrongdoing lot*, which now sounds like a hint directed at those who give water to

pilgrims and maintain the mosque rather than one aimed at those who consider the two groups equal.

This shows, first of all, that those who considered these two groups equal were, in fact, equating pre-Islamic deeds empty of faith in God and the Last Day, such as giving water to pilgrims and maintaining the mosque (without these being predicated upon a person's faith), with religious deeds performed out of a person's belief in God and the Last Day, like striving in the way of God because of one's faith. In other words, they considered the outward form of an act that was devoid of life as equal to a beneficial living deed. For this, God repudiates them.

Second, this shows that those who considered these two kinds of action equal were actually from the camp of the faithful. They were comparing those actions they had performed before converting or that they saw idolaters performing now with the deeds of those who believed sincerely in God. This is evident both from the context of the verse and the different levels of belief and action mentioned in it.

Moreover, the fact that the deeds of giving water to the pilgrims and maintaining the Holy Mosque are mentioned without indicating who is doing them suggests that the ones doing these acts were also believers, but that God did not mention them explicitly to preserve their dignity and to prevent them from being identified with the *wrongdoers* (*ẓālimīn*) mentioned in the verse's coda.

In fact, what God says in the subsequent verse about the reward of those who strive in His way because of their faith— *Those who have believed and migrated and strived in the way of Allah* (9:20)—shows that both parties mentioned in the comparison—*the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims and the maintenance of the Holy Mosque as similar in worth to someone who has faith in Allah*—are actually inhabitants of Mecca, and that one of the two parties, those who believed in God and strived, are those who converted and emigrated, while the other party converted but did not emigrate. This is why God mentions faith (*īmān*) and striving (*jihād*) on the one hand, then adds emigration (*hijra*) to that when He mentions it again. On the other hand, He mentions giving water to the pilgrims and maintaining the mosque, but He does not add anything to that whether the first or second time around. This is an example of the subtle eloquence to be found in God's speech.

This all supports what has been related concerning this verse's occasion of revelation (*sabab al-nuzūl*), namely that it was revealed concerning ʿAbbās and Shayba on the one hand and ʿAlī on the other: When ʿAbbās boasted that he gave water to the pilgrims and Shayba that he maintained the Holy Mosque,

ʿAlī responded by saying that he had believed in God and strived in His way, so God revealed this verse. We shall discuss this report in our treatment of the narrations, below.

In any case, this verse and those that follow it show that the only works with lasting value are those that are giving life by the spirit of faith, and that faith without works is like a body without an animating spirit; it has no life and neither weighs anything on the scales of deeds nor fetches any price in the marketplace of spiritual goods. Therefore, the faithful should not only consider the outward form of deeds when they wish to know which are virtuous and means of attaining nearness to God, but must also see whether or not these deeds are given life by faith and dedication.

This explains the connection between God's words in the present verse, *do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims and the maintenance of the Holy Mosque*..., and the verses following it with the previous two verses, namely: *It is not for the polytheists to maintain Allah's mosques while they are witness to their own unfaith*... (9:17).

In addition, this shows, first of all, that when God says, *Allah does not guide the wrongdoing lot*, this is an adverbial sentence that is intended to explain why they are wrong to equate the two sets of deeds mentioned at the beginning of the verse: *Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims and the maintenance of the Holy Mosque as similar in worth to someone who has faith in Allah*...

Second, it shows that the wrongdoing (*ẓulm*) mentioned here refers to the idolatrous beliefs they followed while they were giving water to the pilgrims and maintaining the mosque, not to their equating giving water to the pilgrims and maintaining the mosque to striving in the way of God based on one's faith.

Third, this verse negates any benefit coming to them from these deeds in the form of being guided to eternal happiness, which is nothing other than success, mercy, divine satisfaction, and paradise.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ أَعْظَمُ
دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

(9:20) ***Those who have believed and migrated and strived in the way of Allah with their possessions and persons have a greater rank near Allah, and it is they who are the triumphant.***

This verse shows how God sees the reality of the situation after denying

that the two parties are equal; that the one who believed, emigrated, and strived in the way of God to the best of his ability by giving whatever he had of his person and possessions is of greater rank in the eyes of God. The plural form—*those who have believed*—is used here to show that the criterion for this distinction is the trait rather than the person.

We have already discussed how these verses show that deeds that do not emanate from faith in God add no merit and no value to their doer in the eyes of God. This means that when the verse says that those who believed, migrated, and strived '*have a greater rank*,' this comparison should not be taken to mean that both groups share some ranks in common in the eyes of God and that those who migrated and strived merely occupy a rank above those who give water to pilgrims and maintain the mosque. On the contrary, the relationship being portrayed here is between one who is superior and one who has no merit whatsoever, akin to comparing the most with the least. This would suggest the existence of an intermediate level between the two of them, which would mean that there are three levels: One level is intermediate, sitting between the other two and, of these, one is higher than it and the other is lower. And, if we were to compare the highest with the lowest, we would be comparing something with all the height to something with no height whatsoever.

So, when the Qur'an says they *have a greater rank near Allah*, this is in comparison to those who have no rank with Him whatsoever, which makes this phrase a subtle allusion to the fact that there really is no comparison between the two groups, because one of them enjoys a standing lofty beyond compare, while the other has no standing whatsoever.

This is also indicated by the phrase, *and it is they who are the triumphant*, as it signifies that only the latter group have triumphed and that this state of triumph is lasting and established for them.

يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنْهُ وَرِضْوَانٍ وَجَنَّاتٍ لَهُمْ فِيهَا نَعِيمٌ مُقِيمٌ ﴿٢١﴾
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

(9:21-22) ***Their Lord gives them the good news of a mercy from Him and a satisfaction, and gardens for them in which there is lasting bliss, to remain therein forever. With Allah indeed is a great reward.***

Based on the context in which it occurs, this enumeration of the blessings that await the faithful explains the nature of the triumph (*fawz*) they were

said to have attained in the previous verse. This is presented in the form of glad tidings about what is to come.

Therefore, the meaning is: *Their Lord gives them*—those faithful who have believed, emigrated, and strived in His way—*glad tidings of a mercy from Him*—that is too magnificent to be described—*and a satisfaction*—that is likewise such—*and gardens for them in which*—in those gardens—*is lasting bliss*—that will never fade and never pass away—*to remain therein forever*—their lives in these gardens will have no limits and no expiration.

This verse is intended to convey something astonishing, because it gives glad tidings of something more magnificent than anything ever seen in this world—something which, therefore, must seem unbelievable to human minds. However, this tension is resolved with the verse's coda: *With Allah indeed is a great reward*.

And we will provide a full elaboration of the meanings of God's mercy (*raḥma*) and satisfaction (*riḍwān*) later in our commentary, and we have already touched on this previously.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا آبَاءَكُمْ وَإِخْوَانَكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا
الْكُفْرَ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

(9:23) ***O you who have faith! Do not take your fathers and brothers as allies if they prefer faithlessness to faith. Those of you who make allies of them—it is they who are the wrongdoers.***

This verse forbids the faithful from making allies of the disbelievers, even if those disbelievers are one's own kith and kin. This criterion is general. The subsequent verse forbids taking any of them as allies, although the apparent meaning of the verse is to prohibit taking one's fathers and brothers as allies if they prefer faithlessness (*kufr*) to faith (*īmān*).

Fathers and brothers are mentioned here rather than sons and spouses, even though both of these are no less dear to people than their parents and siblings, because to take someone as an ally (*walī*) means to allow them to interfere in your affairs and involve themselves in some aspects of your life. This is the unacceptable scenario that the prohibition on taking disbelievers as allies is intended to forestall, so that the disbelievers will not interfere in the believer's personal affairs or sway their hearts so that they will refrain from doing things that the disbelievers dislike or that will be harmful to their interests. Evidently, it is not expected that wives and children will have this

same effect on the faithful unless they are used an intermediary. This is why the prohibition on taking allies in this verse singles out fathers and brothers, because they are the ones most able to involve themselves in the lives of the faithful and interfere in their affairs.

The prohibition on taking the faithless as allies appears in numerous places throughout the Qur'an. We have already seen some of these in Sūrah al-Mā'ida, Āl 'Imrān, al-Nisā', and al-A'rāf, and many of them issue stern warnings and harsh reprimands to the believers. For example: *Any of you who allies with them is indeed one of them* (5:51); *...and whoever does that Allah will have nothing to do with him... Allah warns you to beware of Him* (3:28); *Do you wish to give Allah a clear sanction against yourselves?* (4:144)

In the present verse, God warns the faithful with the words: *Those of you who make allies of them—it is they who are the wrongdoers.* Note that He does not say: 'Those of you who make allies of them, you are from them,' as a listener might imagine that he is already 'from them' because they are his father and brothers, in which case the divine threat will not have the desired impact in encouraging him to reject their patronage.

In any case, the phrase, *those of you who make allies of them—it is they who are the wrongdoers*, contains a number of devices of emphasis. For example, it is a nominal sentence rather than a verbal one, the predicate ('*it is they who are the wrongdoers*') includes both the definite article (*the wrongdoers*, Ar. *al-ẓālimūn*) and a separating pronoun (*they*, Ar. *ulā'ika*). This shows that, in addition to the wrongness of the act itself, by doing this, wrongdoing becomes a fixed trait of theirs. Moreover, God has repeatedly said that he does not guide the wrongdoers or wrongdoing peoples. For example, on this topic in Sūrah al-Mā'ida, He says: *Any of you who allies with them is indeed one of them. Indeed Allah does not guide the wrongdoing lot* (5:51). Therefore, in doing this, they will become those who are deprived of divine guidance, which means that their good deeds will be of no use in obtaining everlasting happiness for them, and neither will they attain triumph or success.

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ
وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ
إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ
وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

(9:24) ***Say, 'If your fathers and your sons, your brethren, your spouses, and your kinsfolk, the possessions that you have acquired, the business you fear may suffer, and the dwellings you are fond of, are dearer to you than Allah and His Apostle and to striving in His way, then wait until Allah issues His edict, and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot.***

This verse opens with a transition (*iltifāt*) from addressing the believers to addressing the Prophet, as if to indicate that he should turn away from them. This is because it is clear from their behavior that their hearts are inclined towards taking their disbelieving fathers and brothers as allies, and that prohibiting them from this will be of no use. Nor will any amount of admonition motivate them to pay attention to the commands of God and His Messenger or to strive for the sake of God by fighting the disbelievers, even if these disbelievers are their own kith and kin.

What prevents them from obeying God's commands is their love of things beside God and His Messenger and striving in God's way. Hence, in this verse, God enumerates the objects of their selfish affection amongst the ornaments of the life of this world, namely their fathers, sons, brothers, spouses, and tribes, as these are the natural communities that people are born into and to which they are bound by familial ties, whether by blood or marriage, close or distant. Also in this category is the wealth that they earn and amass, the trade whose loss they fear, and the homes which they enjoy, as these represent the second level of social stability after the bonds of kinship.

God warns them that if they make allies out of the enemies of the faith and prioritize their status and position over the love of God, His Messenger, and striving in His way, then they should be ready for God to issue his edict and know that He does not guide a wrongdoing people.

From the context, it is evident that the conditional statement, *if your fathers...*, conveys the meaning of: 'If you do not desist from what God has prohibited to you, namely taking your disbelieving fathers and brothers as allies by relying on them, this will cause you to turn your back on God's summons and forget the very purpose of the religion, which is to strive for the sake of God.'

Therefore, the 'edict' (*amr*) mentioned in the consequent of this conditional statement, namely, *then wait until Allah issues His edict*, can mean one of two things. Either this edict refers to something that will compensate for the damage caused to the faith by their failure to abide by God's commands

or a punishment that will descend upon them as a result of their disobeying God and the Messenger and turning their back on the divine struggle.

This is in addition to the coda, *and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot*, which intimates to them that should they not abide by God's commands, they will have gone out from under the umbrella of divine servanthood (*'ubūdiyya*) and become transgressors (*fāsiqūn*) against God and His Messenger. As a result, God will no longer guide them in their actions or grant them the blessing of supporting God and His Messenger by raising the slogan of the true faith and erasing all traces of idolatry.

This coda shows that the 'edict' that they are told to expect earlier in the verse refers to God's command to help the religion and raise up its message. Therefore, this is similar in meaning to the verse in Sūrah al-Mā'ida, which also concerns taking the disbelievers as allies: *O you who have faith! Should any of you desert his religion, Allah will soon bring a people whom He loves and who love Him,* (who will be) *humble towards the faithful, stern towards the faithless, striving in the way of Allah, not fearing the blame of any blamer. That is Allah's grace which He grants to whomever He wishes, and Allah is all-bounteous, all-knowing* (5:54). Taking into account this verse's particularities and conditions, it is clear that it conveys the same meaning as the verse presently under consideration.

Therefore, the overall meaning of the verse is: 'If you take them as allies and refuse to obey God and His Messenger and to strive in His way, then be prepared for God's edict. He will send a people that love only Him and will not take His enemies as friends. They will support the religion of truth and strive in His way in the best manner possible. Then you will be transgressors, for whom the religion will be of no benefit, and God will not guide any of your deeds towards the goal of truth and eternal happiness.

Some commentators have suggested that the phrase, *then wait until Allah issues His edict*, refers to the conquest of Mecca. However, this is not a sound reading, because this verse is addressed to the believers from both the Emigrants and the Helpers, but especially the Emigrants, who were actually involved in the conquest of Mecca. Therefore, it does not make any sense to address them and say: '*If your fathers and your sons* are dearer to you than God, His Messenger, and striving in His way, and you take them as allies and refuse to obey God and His Messenger or strive in His way, then be prepared for God to subdue Mecca with your hands, and God does not guide the wrongdoing lot' *or* '...then just wait until God subdues Mecca, and God does not guide the wrongdoing lot' *or* '...then just wait until God subdues

Mecca, and God will not guide you because of your sinfulness.' This should be evident upon reflection.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, concerning the verse: *Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims* (9:19), it is narrated from the *Amālī* of Shaykh al-Ṭūsī via a chain of narrators leading to al-Aʿmash, from Sālim ibn Abī al-Jaʿad, via an incomplete chain (*marfūʿ*) from Abū Dharr, in a tradition about the Council (*Shūrā*) detailing ʿAlī's argument to those assembled. He told them: 'Is there any amongst you about whom this verse was revealed: *Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims and the maintenance of the Holy Mosque as similar in worth to someone who has faith in Allah and believes in the Last Day and strives in the way of Allah?* Is there any aside from me?' They said: 'No.'

(2) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is narrated via Abū al-Jārūd from Imām al-Bāqir: 'This verse was revealed about ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib: *Those who have believed and migrated and strived in the way of Allah with their possessions and persons have a greater rank near Allah, and it is they who are the triumphant* (9:20). Then God described what He has in store for ʿAlī in the Hereafter: *Their Lord gives them the good news of a mercy from Him and a satisfaction, and gardens for them in which there is lasting bliss* (9:21)'.

(3) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, it is narrated from al-Ḥākim Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥasakānī via a chain of narrators from Abū Burayda, from his father: 'Shayba and ʿAbbās were vying with each another to see who had more merit as ʿAlī was passing by. He stopped and asked them: "Of what do you boast?"

"Abbās answered him: "I have been favoured like no other with the honor of giving water to the Hajj pilgrims!"

'Shayba said: "I have been entrusted with maintaining the Holy Mosque!"

"Alī said: "I tell you both, I was given something, in spite of my young age, that neither of you have been given."

'They asked: "What were you given, O ʿAlī?"

'He said: "Striking both of your noses with my sword until you believed in God Almighty and His Messenger!"

'Upon hearing this, ʿAbbās stood up angrily and went, dragging his

robes on the ground, to the Messenger of God. He told him: "Do you not see how ʿAlī answered me?"

ʿHe said: ʿCall ʿAlī for me."

ʿSo ʿAlī came and the Prophet asked him: "Why did you answer your uncle in this way, ʿAlī?"

ʿHe said: "O Messenger of God, I spoke the truth. It is up to him whether he is happy or not."

ʿThen Gabriel came and said: "O Muḥammad, your Lord sends peace upon you and says: 'Recite to them *Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims and the maintenance of the Holy Mosque as similar in worth to someone who has faith in Allah and believes in the Last Day... With Allah indeed is a great reward*'" (9:19–22).

(4) In *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, it is narrated from Muḥammad ibn Kaʿb al-Quraẓī: 'Ṭalḥa ibn Shayba, ʿAbbās, and ʿAlī were vying with one another to see who was superior. Ṭalḥa said: "I am the keeper of God's House and I have its key!" ʿAbbās said: "I am responsible for bringing water and distributing it to the pilgrims." ʿAlī said: "I do not know what the two of you are talking about. I prayed towards the *qibla* for six months before anyone else, and I strove in God's way." Then God revealed the verse *Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims....'*

(5) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, al-Fāryābī narrates from Ibn Sīrīn that ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib came to Mecca and said to ʿAbbās: 'O Uncle, will you not emigrate to Medina and join the Messenger of God?' He replied: 'I maintain God's House and clothe it.' So, God revealed the verse: *Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims*. Then he called other people by name and asked them: 'Will you not emigrate to Medina and join the Messenger of God?' They said: 'We will stay with our brethren, our tribes, and our homes.' So God revealed the verse *Say, 'If your fathers...'* (9:24).

(6) In the same source, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Mundhir, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrate from Ibn ʿAbbās: When ʿAbbās was captured at the Battle of Badr, he said: 'Even if you have preceded us in Islam, emigration, and striving in God's way, it is we who maintained the Holy Mosque, gave water to the Hajj pilgrims, and freed the prisoners!' In response, God revealed *Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims...* meaning that all of this was done while they were idolaters, so God will not accept it from them.

(7) In the same source, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Ḥibbān, al-Ṭabarānī, Abū Shaykh, and Ibn Marduwayh narrate from al-Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr: 'I was beside the pulpit of God's Messenger in a group of the Companions, when one of them said: "I don't understand why I don't perform any practice after Islam except giving water to the Hajj pilgrims." Another said: "Or maintaining the Holy Mosque." Another said: "Or struggling in the way of God, it is better than both of those!"

'So 'Umar rebuked them and said: "Do not raise your voices at the pulpit of the Messenger of God!"—as this was on a Friday—"but when you have offered Friday prayers, God to the Messenger of God and ask him about this disagreement of yours!" So God revealed the verse: *Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims... and Allah does not guide the wrongdoing lot.*'

Author's comments: In his *Tafsīr al-Manār*, after presenting these last four traditions, he says: 'The most reliable of these traditions is that of al-Nuʿmān because of the strength of its chain of narrators and the agreement of its text with the contents of the verse, which rejects the notion that looking after the House of God and its pilgrims—which is an enjoyable good deed—is equivalent to having faith in God, striving in His way using one's own wealth and person, and emigrating for His sake—when these are some of the hardest acts of worship in terms of their demands upon a person's body, wealth, and life.'

As for his claim that the narration of al-Nuʿmān is to be given preference over the others because of the strength of its chain of narrators: First of all, the narration of al-Qurazī is also in agreement with the meaning of the verse and has a strong chain of narrators, as it is narrated by al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī in his *Mustadrak* and he considers it sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*).

Second, that these exegetical narrations are all solitary (*akhbār āḥād*) and, therefore, are not considered authoritative unless they agree with the contents of the verses. The extent of such narrations' authoritativeness is detailed in the science of the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl*): Solitary narrations are considered authoritative in legal matters but in other topics, such as narrations on the stories of the Prophets and exegesis, where there is no legal question to be resolved, these solitary narrations are not deemed authoritative. This is also a rational question, because, after all of the tampering and forgery that has taken place within the tradition literature, especially in the genres of Prophetic stories and Qur'anic exegesis—as the author of *al-Manār* has himself acknowledged

elsewhere, citing Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, who described such narrations as 'baseless' (*lā aṣl lahā*)—it is only possible to rely on narrations that have been established as authentic beyond all doubt. One criterion for this is that its text should agree with the apparent meaning of the Qur'an's verses.

Therefore, when studying non-legal traditions, the researcher must examine them to see if they accord with the apparent meaning of the Qur'an's verses. If they are in agreement with the apparent meaning, then this is a mark of the tradition's reliability, regardless of its chain of narrators (an authentic chain, in this case, is more ornamental). If, on the other hand, they do not agree with the apparent meaning of the Qur'an's verses, then they are worthless and cannot be treated as authoritative, even with an authentic chain.

In practice, we find that many commentators on the Qur'an focus on authenticating chains of narration rather than examining whether or not the contents of the narration are in accord with the meaning of the verses in question. Then, if the chain is authentic, they impose the meaning of the tradition on the Book of God. However, this is not a valid method of exegesis and there is no evidence for its reliability.

Returning to Rashīd Riḍā's preference for the narration of al-Nuʿmān vis-à-vis the other traditions cited on the basis that its text is in agreement with the verse, which according to Riḍā, is about the relative value of different good deeds: Namely, whether serving the House of God and its pilgrims (which is a pleasant good deed to perform) is equivalent to believing in God, striving in His way, and emigrating for His sake (which is a truly difficult undertaking)—a thesis rejected in the verses.

We respond as follows: First of all, all of the narrations mentioned according with the meaning of the verse is as explained by Rashīd Riḍā.

Let us look at the narration of Ibn ʿAbbās, which situates the exchange after ʿAbbās was captured during the Battle of Badr and the Muslims rebuked him. In it, an explicit comparison is made between conversion, emigration, and striving in God's way on the one hand and between giving water to the pilgrims, maintaining the Holy Mosque, and freeing prisoners on the other.

Now, let us examine the narration of Ibn Sīrīn, which says the debate took place between ʿAlī and ʿAbbās in Mecca, when the latter called on him to emigrate and join the Prophet in Medina and ʿAbbās responded: 'I maintain God's House and clothe it.' A narration with a similar meaning is transmitted by Ibn Mardawayh from al-Shaʿbī. In it, ʿAbbās said to ʿAlī: 'I am the uncle of the Prophet, you are the son of his uncle. I give water to the Hajj pilgrims and maintain the Holy Mosque.' Then God revealed the verse: *Do you regard the*

providing of water to Hajj pilgrims....

Ibn Abī Shayba, Abū al-Shaykh, and Ibn Mardawayh also transmit an account from ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿUbayda in which ʿAbbās tells ʿAlī: ʿAm I not already doing something better than emigrating? Am I not giving water to the Hajj pilgrims and maintaining the Holy Mosque?' Then God revealed the above verse.

In any case, the fact of the matter is that this narration also compares giving water to the pilgrims and maintaining the Holy Mosque to emigrating in the way of God, joining the Prophet in Medina, and everything that accompanies that, such as striving in the way of God and other meritorious acts of faith.

We will now turn to the narration of al-Quraẓī, the similar narration transmitted and authenticated by al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī in his *Mustadrak*, in addition to the report ʿAbd al-Razzāq narrates from Ḥasan, that this verse was revealed about ʿAlī, ʿAbbās, ʿUthmān, and Shayba when they were discussing this topic. This is in the same vein as the narration of al-Nuʿmān cited above, where there was a debate taking place about whether giving water to the pilgrims, maintaining the Holy Mosque, or having faith in God and striving in His way was superior. Both of these are clear in their agreement with the basic meaning of the Qur'anic verse. Therefore, why should Rashīd Riḍā give priority to the narration of al-Nuʿmān over all of the others or claim that it alone matches the contents of the verse? This is the first issue with the interpretation presented in *Tafsīr al-Manār*.

As for the second issue, namely that the comparison is between good deeds that were easy and pleasant—like giving water to the Hajj pilgrims and clothing the Kaʿba—on the one hand and between good deeds that were difficult and demanding—like believing in God, emigrating, and striving in His way—on the other, this does not agree with the apparent meaning of the verse. As we have already discussed, the apparent meaning of the verse compares the outward form of deeds that are devoid of the spirit of faith—and, therefore, are not good deeds at all—with deeds that are living because they are imbued with the spirit of faith, like emigrating or struggling based on one's faith in God and the Last Day.

Therefore, this verse shows that those being addressed were equating deeds such as giving water to the pilgrims and maintaining the Holy Mosque that were not rooted in faith to deeds such as struggling for the sake of God or emigrating in His way (or even preferring the former to the latter). So how can this verse be read as comparing easy righteous acts with difficult ones? Unless, of course, he means to argue that these deeds performed by ʿAbbās while he

was yet an idolater were still good deeds (as ʿAbbās himself seems to claim in the account). However, the verses admonish ʿAbbās that he is mistaken in his assumptions, as does the end of the narration from Ibn ʿAbbās. Therefore Rashīd Riḍā's reading is to be discounted.

Taking into account the specific criteria they present, the verses are very clear in their meaning. Recall that they explicitly predicate struggling in God's way upon a person's faith in God and the Last Day, while they do not attach any such conditions of faith to giving water to the pilgrims or maintaining the Holy Mosque. Then, God says: *They are not equal with Allah, and Allah does not guide the wrongdoing lot.* This refutes the notion that this is a comparison between the good deeds of different believers, because why would God describe them as wrongdoers (*ẓālimīn*) if what they were doing was basically good, and why would He deny them the blessing of His guidance?

If one were to argue that '*wrongdoers*' here refers to those who consider the two kinds of deeds to be equal or who give preference to providing water to the pilgrims and maintaining the Holy Mosque over striving in the way of God, this would not solve the problem either. After all, such a mistake would hardly make them deserving of being called wrongdoers or being denied God's guidance.

The third issue with Rashīd Riḍā's interpretation in *Tafsīr al-Manār* is his claim that the statement, *as similar in worth to someone who has faith in Allah and believes in the Last Day and strives in the way of Allah? They are not equal with Allah* shows that the person who this part of the verse was about was also subject to the verse's rebuke.

If a perceptive reader ponders on the meaning of the verse and what we have already said about it, they will see that the narration that is furthest from the contents of the verse and the least applicable to it is none other than that of al-Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr, because its meaning is not actually in harmony with the meaning of the verse.

The next weakest narration in terms of its meaning is that of Ibn Sīrīn, as it indicates that ʿAbbās was actually called to emigrate when he was already a Muslim, but then he said that giving water to the pilgrims and clothing the House of God meant that he did not need to emigrate. However, the verses in question do not support such an account, as we have already seen. After all, the narration has ʿAbbās mention giving water to the pilgrims and clothing the House of God, when, in fact, ʿAbbās was only responsible for the first of these and not the second.

The next weakest narration after this is that of Ibn ʿAbbās, as it suggests

that the comparison was only drawn between different deeds, when the verse makes clear that this was about faith as well. Furthermore, in this account, Ibn ʿAbbās mentions giving water to the pilgrims, maintaining the Holy Mosque, and freeing prisoners. However, if that is what he said, then freeing prisoners would have also been mentioned in the verse.

There is a similar narration from Ibn Jarīr and Abū al-Shaykh via al-Ḍaḥḥāk, which reads: The Muslims came forth to ʿAbbās and his companions who they had captured at the Battle of Badr and they rebuked them for their idolatry. ʿAbbās responded by saying: 'By God, we were the ones who maintained the Holy Mosque, freed the prisoners, covered the House of God, and gave water to the pilgrims. Then God revealed the verse: *Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims*. Because this narration also mentions covering the House of God and freeing the prisoners, it is in the same position as that of Ibn ʿAbbās.

Therefore, the soundest of the narrations on this topic and the one that chimes best with the contents of the verses themselves is the report of al-Quraẓī and other reports with the same meaning, such as those of al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī in his *Mustadrak*, the narration of ʿAbd al-Razzāq from al-Ḥasan, and the narrations of Abū Naʿīm al-Iṣfahānī and Ibn ʿAsākir from Anas, presented below, for the reasons we have already outlined.

(8) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is narrated from Abū Naʿīm's *Faḍā'il al-Ṣaḥāba* and Ibn ʿAsākir from Anas that ʿAbbās and Shayba, the keeper of the House of God, were sat vying with one another for status. ʿAbbās said: 'I am nobler than you, for I am the uncle of the Messenger of God and his father's successor and the one who gives water to the Hajj pilgrims!' To this, Shayba responded: 'It is I who is nobler than you, for I am the one God has entrusted to look after His House and its treasures. Else, why did he not trust you with it as he trusted me?'

ʿAlī heard what they had said and told them: 'I am nobler than both of you, for I was the first to believe and emigrate.' So, the three of them went to the Prophet and told him of their dispute. He did not give them any answer, so they went away. Then, after a few days, he received a revelation about this, so he summoned them and recited: *Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims and the maintenance of the Holy Mosque*... and the nine verses that came after it.

(9) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm narrates from his father, from Ṣafwān, from Ibn Muskān, from Abū Baṣīr, from Imām al-Bāqir,

about this verse: 'It was revealed about ʿAlī, ʿAbbās, and Shayba. ʿAbbās said: "I am superior because I give water to the Hajj pilgrims with my own hands!" Shayba said: "I am superior, because I clothe the House of God with my own hands!" ʿAlī said: "I am superior, because I believed before both of you, and emigrated, and strived in the way of God." So they submitted their dispute for the Messenger of God to adjudicate, whereat God sent down the verses: *Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims and the maintenance of the Holy Mosque... With Allah indeed is a great reward* (9:19–22)'.

Author's comments: And al-ʿAyyāshī has also narrated a similar tradition from Abū Baṣīr from Imām al-Ṣādiq, except that ʿUthmān ibn Abī Shayba is mentioned in place of Shayba.

(10) In *al-Kāfī*, it is narrated from Abū ʿAlī al-Ashʿarī, from Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Jabbār, from Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā, from Ibn Muskān, from Abū Baṣīr, from either Imām al-Ṣādiq or Imām al-Bāqir, about the verse, *Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims and the maintenance of the Holy Mosque as similar in worth to someone who has faith in Allah and believes in the Last Day*: 'It was revealed about Ḥamza, ʿAlī, Jaʿfar, ʿAbbās, and Shayba. They (ʿAbbās and Shayba) spoke proudly about giving water to the pilgrims and clothing the House of God, so God revealed this verse about them. ʿAlī, Ḥamza, and Jaʿfar were the ones who believed in God and the Last Day and strove in the way of God. They are not equal in the eyes of God.'

Author's comments: Al-ʿAyyāshī also narrates this in his *Tafsīr* from Abū Baṣīr from either Imām al-Ṣādiq or Imām al-Bāqir. However, this verse does not accord with what has been definitively transmitted, as Ḥamza was one of the first to emigrate for the sake of God's Messenger, then he attained martyrdom at the Battle of Uḥud in the year 3 A.H., while Jaʿfar emigrated to Abyssinia before the Prophet's emigration to Medina, then he returned to Medina shortly at around the time of the conquest of Khaybar, and Ḥamza had already been martyred by this point. Therefore, it is impossible that the five of them could have gathered together and vied with one another in the way the tradition describes, as this could have only taken place before the Prophet emigrated, in which case the following phrase is meaningless: "Alī, Ḥamza, and Jaʿfar were the ones who believed in God and the Last Day and strove in the way of God.'

If the tradition means that this verse was revealed about them in the sense that its meaning could also apply to them by extension (*jarī*), then ʿAbbās

too would be included in their number, because he converted when he was captured at the Battle of Badr, then he participated in some of the battles of the Prophet.

(11) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is narrated from *al-Jamʿ bayn al-Ṣiḥāḥ al-Sitta* by al-ʿAbdī, from the second part of al-Nasāʾī's collection, via his chain of narrators, that Ṭalḥa ibn Shayba of the Banū ʿAbd al-Dār, ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, and ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib were vying with one another for superiority. Ṭalḥa said: 'I have the keys to the House of God. If I wanted to, I could sleep in there!' ʿAbbās said: 'I am the one who brings the water and distributes it to the pilgrims, and if I wanted to, I could sleep in the Holy Mosque.' ʿAlī said: 'I do not know what the two of you are talking about. I prayed towards the *qibla* six months before the rest of the people, and I am the one who strove in the way of God.' Then God revealed the verse: *Do you regard the providing of water to Hajj pilgrims and the maintenance of the Holy Mosque....*

Author's comments: By praying towards the *qibla* for six months before the rest of the people, based on the contents of the verse, ʿAlī is referring to his priority in believing in God, or else the verse should have mentioned prayer explicitly. The narration replaces Shayba with Ṭalḥa ibn Shayba, while other traditions we have already examined identify the third person as Shayba and others still say ʿUthmān ibn Abī Shayba.

(12) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is narrated from Ibn Shahrāshūb, from Abū Ḥamza, from Imām al-Bāqir, concerning the verse, *O you who have faith! Do not take your fathers and brothers as allies if they prefer faithlessness to faith* (9:23): 'Faith is the *wilāya* of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib.'

Author's comments: This is an example of the inner meaning (*bāṭin*) of the Qur'an, which rests on an analysis of the meaning of faith (*īmān*) and its different levels of perfection.

(13) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, we read: When the Commander of the Faithful announced that no idolater would be permitted to enter the Holy Mosque after this year, the Quraysh became extremely anxious. They said: 'Our business is ruined, our families will perish, and our prosperity is at an end!' So, God revealed in response to that: 'O Muḥammad! Say to them *"If your fathers and your sons, your brethren, your spouses, and your kinsfolk... and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot"*' (9:24).

Author's comments: Based on this tradition, one could interpret *wait*

until Allah issues His edict (9:24) as saying that while they might lose some opportunities, others will be opened to them as a result. A similar message is conveyed by the subsequent verse: *O you who have faith! The polytheists are indeed unclean: so let them not approach the Holy Mosque after this year. Should you fear poverty, Allah will enrich you out of His grace, if He wishes. Indeed Allah is all-knowing, all-wise* (9:28). In fact, this would mean that both verses are addressing the same set of concerns. However, the friendly and gracious form of address in the latter verse, *O you who have faith...*, means that it cannot be directed at the same people as the harsh rebuke of the former, *if your fathers and your sons, your brethren... and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot*.

Moreover, this verse mentions their love of their fathers, brothers, kinsmen, and the wealth they have amassed, none of which are mentioned in the narration found in *Tafsīr al-Qummī*. And if the Quraysh were not concerned by the loss of these, then why does the verse mention them or threaten them with punishment if they chose their love of these things over their love of God and His Messenger? Also, if this were the case, what would be the meaning of striving in God's way in the verse?

(14) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and al-Bukhārī narrate from ʿAbdallāh ibn Hishām: 'We were with the Messenger of God while he took hold of the arm of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who said: "By God, surely you are dearer to me than anything else except myself, O Messenger of God!" To which the Prophet replied: "None of you will have believed until I am dearer to you than yourself."'

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Verses 25–28

These verses refer to the Battle of Ḥunayn and recount the divine assistance God granted the believers on that day and on many other occasions like it, where He had come to the aid of His Prophet and the Muslims. In all of their battles, in spite of their being weaker and outnumbered, God sent down miraculous aid to them in the form of invisible armies, inspiring the Prophet and the faithful with composure (*sakīna*), and punishing the faithless with the hands of the faithful.

This also shows that the verses forbidding the idolaters from entering the Sacred Mosque were revealed in the year 9 A.H., and that this was the year in which the Prophet delivered the repudiation proclamation to them and forbade them from circumambulating the house of God in the nude, as this is the year in which the Battle of Ḥunayn took place.

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرَةٍ ۙ وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ ۙ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُمْ مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

(9:25) ***Allah has certainly helped you in many situations* (mawāṭin)*, and on the day of Ḥunayn, when your great number impressed you, but it did not avail you in any way, and the earth became narrow for you in spite of its expanse, whereupon you turned your backs.***

Mawāṭin (situations) is the plural of *mawṭin*, which is derived from *waṭan* and, in its literal sense, denotes the place in which a person lives and resides.

Ḥunayn is the name of a valley between the cities of Mecca and Ṭā'if, in which a battle took place between the Prophet and the tribes of Hawāzin and Thaqīf. It was a difficult day for the Muslims, as they initially retreated, but then God came to their aid, and they triumphed.

I'jāb (impressed) and its cognate *'ajab* (surprise) mean to be gladdened by a rare occurrence.

Raḥab (expanse) means for a space to be large and open, while *ḍayyiq*

(narrow) signifies the opposite.

The verse begins by God recalling the many occasions and circumstances in which God came to the aid of the Muslims—*Allah has certainly helped you in many situations*—and the context indicates that these situations are, in fact, the battles they fought, such as the Battles of Badr, Uḥud, the Trench, Khaybar, and others. The context also shows that this sentence is intended as a preliminary for what follows, namely, *and on the day of Ḥunayn, when your great number impressed you*. Therefore, this verse and the three that follow it were all sent down to remind the Muslims of the story of Ḥunayn and the miraculous and unparalleled aid that God granted them on that day.

Some commentators on the Qur'an have argued that the present verse and the three that follow it are, in fact, the conclusion of the Prophet's speech in the previous verse, where he says: *If your fathers and your sons...* (9:24). However, the opening phrase of this verse, *Allah has certainly helped you*, serves as a natural divider between it and the previous one, and this forces these commentators to engage in intellectual gymnastics to get around this. However, there is no indication in the text that this is supposed to be read as a continuation of the Prophet's speech. In fact, all of the indications are to the opposite: The events of the Day of Ḥunayn, the miraculous assistance sent down by God in the form of composure, invisible armies, and the punishment of the faithless, and the fact that God will forgive whomever He wishes all represent a separate topic to what was being discussed in the previous verse, and one that is important for its own reasons. In fact, it is of equal or greater importance than what is being said in the previous verse (*If your fathers and your sons...*)—therefore, there is no basis for arguing that it follows from that verse.

Therefore, if this was something that the Prophet was meant to tell his people, this too should have been prefixed by the imperative, 'say' (*qul*), as in: 'Say: "*Allah has certainly helped you in many situations...*"' as this is the style of the Qur'an in similar circumstances. For example, in the passage from Sūrah Fuṣṣilat: *Say, 'I am just a human being like you. It has been revealed to me that your Allah is the One Allah....' Say, 'Do you really disbelieve in Him who created the earth in two days, and ascribe partners to Him? That is the Lord of all the worlds!'* (41:6–9).

Moreover, the tone of these verses, their use of transitions of address (*iltifāt*), and other rhetorical features do not accord with them being part of the previous speech that the Prophet was instructed to deliver. This is because the audience being addressed by the verse *Allah has certainly helped you in many situations... when your great number impressed you* is the Muslims, who

comprise a single unified Islamic community, and their unity was on display in other battles such as Badr, Uḥud, the Trench, and Khaybar, as well as Ḥunayn. However, the Muslims also contain a diversity of people: there are hypocrites and people of weak faith among their ranks, as well as believers possessed of true faith. However, this verse speaks to them as a single totality, as shown by the remark, *when your great number impressed you*.

God uses the phrase, *the Day of Ḥunayn* to mean: 'The day on which the battle took place between you and your enemies in the valley of Ḥunayn.' This is because it is a convention of the Arabic language to refer to a momentous event by prefixing the place it occurred with the word 'day' (*yawm*). Hence, we can speak of the 'day' of Badr or the 'day' of Uḥud. Alternatively, 'day' can also be added to the group involved in the event, such as the 'day' of the Confederates (*Aḥzāb*) or the 'day' of the Tamīm tribe, or to the name of the event itself, such as the 'day' of Mecca's conquest (*fatḥ Makka*).

...when your great number impressed you: Meaning, you were pleased because you thought you had numerical superiority over your enemy, so you no longer felt the need to depend upon God or entrust yourself to His hands and His power. Instead, you relied on your numbers to bring you victory, to thwart the plans of your foes, and to drive them from the field of battle. However, numerical superiority is only an apparent cause (*sabab ẓāhirī*), which will have no effect without God willing it so, for He is the Cause of Causes.

It is with this meaning in mind that God follows the phrase, *when your great number impressed you*, with *but it did not avail you in any way*. In other words, you took your numerical superiority as a means of victory that was not dependent upon God, so you forgot God and you forgot to rely upon Him, relying instead on your numbers. However, it soon became apparent that your great numbers were of no avail to you and did not help you against your enemies.

...and the earth became narrow for you in spite of its expanse: This conjures the image of being surrounded by enemies and being unable to find a place of safety, such as some cover or a cave, in which you could seek protection from them. Therefore, you fled without a thought for anything else.

This verse is similar in meaning to what we read in the story of the Confederates (*al-Aḥzāb*) and the Battle of the Trench: *When they came at you from above and below you, and when the eyes rolled with fear and the hearts leapt to the throats, and you entertained misgivings about Allah* (33:10).

Some commentators have read *the earth became narrow for you* to mean

that they could not find any escape, but this is not correct.

...whereupon you turned your backs: In other words, you put the enemy behind you, alluding to the fact that they ran away from the front lines. This was the result of their overconfidence because of their superior numbers and because they had forsaken their Lord. God says: *O you who have faith! When you encounter the faithless advancing for battle, do not turn your backs to flee from them. Whoever turns his back to flee from them that day—unless diverting to fight or retiring towards another troop—shall certainly earn Allah's wrath, and his refuge shall be hell, an evil destination* (8:15–16).

And elsewhere, He says: *...though they had certainly pledged to Allah before that they would not turn their backs to flee, and pledges given to Allah are accountable* (33:15).

All of this—by which I mean the earth becoming narrow for them, their flight from the field of battle in spite of it being a major sin, and putting themselves in the position of deserving God's rebuke—came about because they had relied on the false promise of numerical superiority and forgotten to put their trust in God. As a result, none of their imagined advantages proved to be of any avail in the heat of battle.

And yet, in his infinite mercy and limitless kindness, God came to the Muslims' aid. He sent down composure upon them, supported them with armies they could not see, and punished the disbelievers. He even left open the possibility of forgiveness; He did not guarantee it, lest they lose all fear from their hearts, but nor did He rule it out, so they would not lose all hope either. Instead, He promised the possibility of redemption to them, so that the traits of hope and fear would be balanced in their souls. In this way, He delivered a good moral education to them that would make them ready for Paradise.

One commentator has offered a very strange reading of this verse based on their efforts to reconcile the apparent meanings of the different narrations they have compiled about it. They claim that the Muslims did not, in fact, flee from battle out of cowardice. On the contrary, they were merely caught off guard by the attack of the Thaqīf and Hawāzin tribes and, in the confusion, were forced to fall back from their positions, and that is a natural response to such an occurrence.

This reading, they say, is supported by the fact that God sent down composure upon the Messenger of God and the Muslims, as this indicates that even the Prophet was caught up in the shock and confusion. However, the Prophet was affected by this out of his grief at the sudden turn of events, while the rest of the Muslims were affected by it because of their shock at the

force of the attack and the fact that the enemy did not give them any respite.

It is also attested to by the fact that, no sooner had Muslims heard the call of the Messenger of God and the call of ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, that they returned to the fray and drove back the disbelievers with the help of the composure that God had sent down upon them.

As further evidence, the commentator cites the verses revealed in praise of the Companions, such as the verse about the Pledge of Ḥudaybiyya (also known as the *Bayʿat al-Riḍwān*): *Muḥammad, the Messenger of Allah, and those who are with him are hard against the faithless…* (48:29), and *Indeed Allah has bought from the faithful their souls and their possessions for paradise to be theirs…* (9:111), along with the various narrations that praise the Companions of the Prophet.

However, in taking this approach, the commentator has confused Qur'anic commentary (*tafsīr*) with theology (*kalām*). Qur'anic commentary is only concerned with uncovering the meaning of the divine revelation. Theology, by contrast, is concerned with supporting or rejecting the claims advanced by theologians according to their respective schools of thought, whether by use of reason (*ʿaql*), the Qur'an, the *Sunna*, consensus (*ijmāʿ*), or some combination of these. However, the discipline of Qur'anic commentary does not allow any such approach when it comes to understanding God's words, nor does it allow anyone to impose their theories—of theology, science, or any other subject—onto the verses that God has sent down.

Now, let us consider his claim that the Muslims did not flee out of cowardice and that they did not abandon the Prophet, but that they merely withdrew as a result of the confusion that took hold in their ranks because of the powerful attack of the Thaqīf and Hawāzin and that, after they initially fell back, they returned to the fray and redoubled their efforts. This claim is clearly contradicted by the phrase, *whereupon you turned your backs*, as this shows their actions on that day fell within the scope of the verse that forbids the Muslims from fleeing from battle: *Whoever turns his back to flee from them that day… shall certainly earn Allah's wrath* (8:16). God did not qualify this prohibition on turning their backs by saying that it only applied to those who did so out of cowardice or those who were betraying the Prophet, nor did he make an exception by saying that it did not apply to those who were fleeing in confusion or panic, and nor does the exception He did make—*unless diverting to fight or retiring towards another troop*—apply to them.

Neither does God recount there being any exceptions to the faithful's pledge: *though they had certainly pledged to Allah before that they would not*

turn their backs to flee, and pledges given to Allah are accountable (33:15).

Now, let us turn to the commentator's claim that the panic and confusion of the Muslims was something that even the Prophet felt. He argues this based on the verse, *then Allah sent down His composure upon His Messenger and upon the faithful* (9:26), in which he says the preposition '*then*' shows that this composure was sent down after they had fled, which would indicate that the Prophet was also gripped by worry by this point, although that his worry was because of his grief at the turn of events, as it is inconceivable that he would lose courage.

What grief, then, did the Prophet feel on that day? Was he grieved because the tide of battle had turned, because the Muslims had fled, and because God had afflicted them with tribulation because they had allowed themselves to become overconfident on account of their superior numbers? In short, was his grief something disagreeable in the eyes of God? If so, this would not accord with his status, because God has educated Him through His revelations and taught Him from His knowledge. It was God, after all, who told him: *You have no hand in the matter* (3:128) and *We shall have you recite, then you will not forget* (87:6). Moreover, the accounts of the Battle of Ḥunayn do not give any indication that the Prophet left his position or became distressed by the rout of the Muslims.

On the other hand, what if the Prophet was grieved for the Muslims because of what befell them because they had wrongly placed their trust in something other than God, relied on illusory expectations of victory, forgotten to rely on Him, and then compounded their sinfulness by fleeing from the battlefield? In this case, he would have been grieved for them because of his concern for them, but this is something loved by God. Indeed, God praises him as someone who *is most kind and merciful to the faithful* (9:128). This kind of grief, however, would not have been removed by the composure that God sent down. Moreover, even if this composure was sent down as a result of the rout of the Muslim army, this does not entail that the Prophet had lost his composure prior to this. On the contrary, the Prophet had been following clear guidance from his Lord from the moment his mission began and would continue to do so until his dying breath. From this point of view, composure was constantly being sent down on him from one moment to the next.

But, if this is the case, then what exactly is the composure (*sakīna*) that was sent down upon the faithful at Ḥunayn? What was its nature? Was it a psychological state that comes from stillness and tranquillity, per the statement of the author of *al-Miṣbāḥ*, who says it refers to sobriety, dignity, and steadiness?

In which case, did the steadfastness of the disbelievers in battle come from a composure that was sent down to them? If this is the nature of composure, then at first it was with the disbelievers of the Hawāzin and Thaqīf tribes who were fighting the Muslims. Then, it left them and descended upon all of the Muslims, including the believers who stood fast beside the Messenger of God and believers who did not stand fast and chose to flee instead, and even the hypocrites, those of weak faith, and those with sicknesses in their hearts, as all of them returned to the fray and renewed their efforts alongside the Prophet and fought by his side until they drove off the enemy. Therefore, according to this understanding, all of them seem to have composure sent down upon by them by God. But, if this is the case, then why does God single out His Messenger and the believers for mention when He says, *Then Allah sent down His composure upon His Messenger and upon the faithful*?

After all, if this is the meaning of composure, it is something granted to every believer and disbeliever, so how can God count it as a blessing He bestowed upon the faithful, as though this is a special gift not given to everyone? And He does not mention composure in the Qur'an except on a few occasions—less than ten, in fact.

From the above, it is evident that *sakīna* refers to something beyond mere steadfastness and tranquillity. However, this not in the sense that the word *sakīna* signifies a meaning in language or customary usage beyond that of a psychological state, but rather in the sense that what God means by *sakīna* in the Qur'an is something more than the quality we find in any brave warrior on the battlefield. Instead, it signifies a tranquillity of the soul with qualities and attributes that are unique to it.

In what sense is this? Well, whenever God mentions *sakīna* as a blessing He has sent down upon His Messenger and the faithful, He portrays it as something He has sent down especially from Himself. Therefore, *sakīna* in the Qur'an refers to a divine state in which God's servant does not forget the station of his Lord. This is distinct from the ordinary bravery or valor displayed by those who are sure of themselves. After all, when we look at the instances of *sakīna* in the Qur'an, we see that it is often associated with qualities that not every brave or stoic person possesses. For example, God says about His Messenger: *He said to his companion, 'Do not grieve; Allah is indeed with us.' Then Allah sent down His composure upon him, and strengthened him with hosts you did not see* (9:40).

And about the faithful, God says: *Allah was certainly pleased with the faithful when they swore allegiance to you under the tree. He knew what was in*

their hearts, so He sent down composure on them (48:18).

Notice that God says that He only sent down composure upon them because He knew what was in their hearts. This shows that, in order for God to send down this composure, a person's heart must already be in a state of purity to receive it, and the context of the latter verse shows that this refers to truthfulness and sincerity, such that the person will not break their pledge.

God also says: *It is He who sent down composure into the hearts of the faithful that they might enhance their faith. To Allah belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth* (48:4).

And He mentions that one of the effects of this composure is to increase a person's faith: *When the faithless nourished bigotry in their hearts, the bigotry of pagan ignorance, Allah sent down His composure upon His Messenger and upon the faithful, and made them abide by the word of Godwariness, for they were the worthiest of it and deserved it* (48:26).

As you can see, this verse also portrays composure being sent down by God when the recipient's heart is ready for it and when their character is worthy of it. This is what the previous verse meant when it said, *He knew what was in their hearts*. And this verse shows that one of the effects of this composure is that a person abides by *the word of Godwariness*, which means that their soul is purified of any disobedience to God and His Messenger and that they will avoid all sins and forbidden things.

This resembles the explanation one commentator has given regarding the verse, *that they might enhance their faith* (48:4); the sending down of composure augments their faith with more faith, and this means that the human being is divinely protected from committing sins or perpetrating forbidden acts by virtue of his sincere belief in the religion of truth.

This provides clear evidence of a number of things:

First, in the verse under discussion— *then Allah sent down His composure upon His Messenger and upon the faithful*—the term *faithful* (mu'minīn) does not include the hypocrites, those with sicknesses in their hearts, or the weak of faith. Therefore, it leaves only those of the believers who stood their ground and never left the Prophet's side—and they are either four, nine, ten, eighty, or less than one hundred in number according to the different narrations—and those who initially fled and deserted the Prophet then returned to his side and fought. The latter group comprises the majority of the Prophet's Companions, including some of the most elite of them. Therefore, the question here is, which of these groups is meant by '*the faithful*' in this verse? Is it both those who stood their ground and those who fled at first then returned

to the fight? Or does it only refer to those who never left his side until God sent them divine assistance?

From the verses that mention composure (*sakīna*), it is evident that it is only sent down on those who already have pure hearts and sincere souls, it is only people with these traits who God steadies with His composure. Now, those who committed the major sin of fleeing from the fight had sinful hearts. Therefore, they lacked a suitable vessel with which to receive God's composure. If composure was indeed sent down upon them, they would have had to regret their sinful actions first and sincerely and truthfully repent to their Lord for what they did. Then and only then would God, knowing the state of their hearts, send down His composure upon them. In other words, because they were sinful, they would have had to repent and return to battle before God sent down His *sakīna* and came to their aid against their enemies. Perhaps that is what is implied here by the use of the preposition *thumma* ('then') at the start of the verse.

However, even then, there remain a number of problems: First, the fact that God mentions repentance and forgiveness in the following verse, namely after this composure was sent. Therefore, in order for us to accept that the composure was sent down upon those who ran away and came back, we must restrict the verse, *then Allah shall turn clemently after that to whomever He wishes. Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful* (9:27), to the disbelievers amongst them who converted to Islam after this. However, there is no trace of such an implication in the verse itself, nor is there any evidence to restrict it to the disbelievers who converted later.

Second, in adopting such a reading, we completely ignore the great courage and steadfastness of those few souls who found themselves in such trying circumstances but still stood their ground beside the Prophet when the overwhelming majority of the Muslims had fled and abandoned him to his enemies without a second thought. And it is not the Qur'an's habit to overlook someone who endures a difficult trial for the sake of God, or puts himself into danger's way seeking His gratification, for God is all-knowing and most-appreciative, and it does not befit His grandeur not to praise or thank such a person.

On the contrary, when the Qur'an censures or rebukes a people as a whole, while there are individuals amongst them who are innocent of blame, free from error, or absolved from sin, it is God's habit to distinguish between them and their people. He does this by singling them out for praise and commending them for their virtuousness and righteous conduct. This is something plainly

visible in the sections of the Qur'an that criticise and admonish the Jews and the Christians at the Prophet's time: When God reproaches the majority for disbelieving in His signs and disobeying His commandments and prohibitions, He follows this by praising the minority who have believed in Him and His signs and who have carried out His will through their actions.

The clearest example of this, however, comes from the verses dealing with the Battle of Uḥud. In these, God enumerates the blessings He granted to the faithful in the form of His assistance and generosity, then He reprimands them for the weakness and spinelessness they have shown, before singling out those who stood fast and demonstrated their sincerity for praise and making a beautiful promise to them, not once but twice: *and soon Allah will reward the grateful* (3:144) and, *and soon We will reward the grateful* (3:145).

We see the Qur'an saying something similar in the aftermath of the Battle of the Trench. It begins by harshly reproving a group of the faithful, before delivering a severe condemnation of the hypocrites and those in whose hearts there was a sickness. Then, God says: *though they had certainly pledged to Allah before that they would not turn their backs, and pledges given to Allah are accountable* (33:15). However, God ends the story with the following conclusion: *Among the faithful are men who fulfil what they have pledged to Allah. Of them are some who have fulfilled their pledge, and of them are some who still wait, and they have not changed in the least* (33:23).

Given the above, why would God not pay attention to those exceptional few who stood their ground on the Day of Ḥunayn? After all, as a battle, it was certainly no less trying than any of the others mentioned here. Why would not God single them out for appreciation or praise, given that they would have certainly hoped to receive the same gracious commendation that others had been granted before them in other battles?

All of this would seem to point us to the conclusion that when God says '*the faithful*' in the present verse and says that He sent down '*composure*' upon them, He is referring to the believers that stood their ground beside the Prophet. As for the rest of the believers, who returned to fight after first running away, some are included in the subsequent verse, namely: *Then Allah shall turn clemently after that to whomever He wishes. Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful*. The ones included in '*whomever He wishes*' are those of them to whom He showed his grace, and included with them are the disbelievers of the Hawāzin and Thaqīf tribes to whom God granted success and grace through guiding them, as well as the *ṭulaqā'* ('freed-ones,' late converts from the Quraysh who had only accepted Islam after surrendering to the Prophet at

Mecca) and those who had a sickness in their hearts who reformed themselves. This is the conclusion drawn from the exegetical treatment of these verses. As for the narrations that have come down in this regard, they have their own position, and some of them will be examined below.

As for the aforementioned commentator's claim that the Muslims came rushing back as soon as they heard the Prophet and his uncle ʿAbbās call out, this does not in any way refute what we have said about the apparent meaning of the verse, *whereupon you turned your backs* (9:25) when it is placed beside the earlier injunction: *O you who have faith! When you encounter the faithless advancing for battle, do not turn your backs to flee from them...* (8:15). Those Muslims who ran away did, in fact, turn their backs to flee from battle; it does not matter whether they did so out of cowardice, treachery, or confusion and desperation.

As for the verses he mentions that praise the Companions, say that God is pleased with them, and say that they are worthy of abundant rewards from their Lord, the praise given in these verses is predicated upon certain conditions being fulfilled, without which it would not apply to them. The verses in question only praise them because they display the qualities of divine servanthood, such as faith (*īmān*), devotion (*ikhlāṣ*), veracity (*ṣidq*), sincerity (*naṣīḥa*), and striving for the faith. Therefore, the praise only applies to people so long as these qualities are found in them. Equally, the beautiful promises that God makes to them only hold insofar as the attributes and characteristics that engendered those promises still exist in the people to whom they were given. In the event that they disappear because of some error or misdeed, then the praises and the promises cease to apply by extension.

After all, whatever goodness or blessings are found in them, these cannot be any greater or more momentous than the quality of infallibility (*ʿiṣma*) that was possessed by the prophets, which they would have lost through the commission of a single sin. God says about own His prophets after heaping praise on them: *But were they to ascribe any partners (to Allah), what they used to do would not avail them* (6:88).

Equally, God says about those who imagined that they were safe from any kind of unpleasant punishment by virtue of their outward submission, which is something akin to what the People of the Book believed about themselves: *It will be neither after your hopes nor the hopes of the People of the Book: whoever commits evil shall be requited for it* (4:123).

As for what the Qur'an says about the Pledge of Ḥudaybiyya (*Bayʿat al-Riḍwān*)—*Allah was certainly pleased with the faithful when they swore*

allegiance to you under the tree (48:18)—God's being pleased (*riḍā*) with someone is a divine attribute of action (*ṣifa fiʿliyya*), which means it does not subsist in God's essence but rather is something abstracted from His actions in the world. Therefore, these attributes are identical with God's actions. In this case, God's being pleased with someone is identical with the pure state of their soul. It is this inner state that makes them worthy of divine recompense and an excellent reward, so long as their behavior does not change after this. If their behavior changes for the worse, then God's satisfaction with them will become His anger (*sukhuṭ*) toward them, and their blessings will turn to misfortunes. No one has received a pledge from God—and God does not break His pledges—that He will grant them eternal happiness and endless bounties no matter whether they do good or evil, whether they obey or disobey, or whether they believe or disbelieve.

This is because God's satisfaction is not an attribute of His essence, such that it would not be subject to change or alteration or that it could not disappear or be effaced.

ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ جُنُودًا لَمْ تَرَوْهَا
وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾

(9:26) ***Then Allah sent down His composure upon His Messenger and upon the faithful, and He sent down hosts you did not see, and He punished the faithless, and that is the requital of the faithless.***

As we have already discussed, *sakīna* ('composure') refers to a state of a person's heart that grants them tranquillity of the soul and steadfastness of heart. According to the verses of the Qur'an, this trait goes hand-in-hand with their faith being increased with more faith and the word of Godwariness (*kalimat al-taqwā*, see 48:26), which guides them to be wary of the things that God has prohibited or sanctified.

However, *sakīna* is not the same as *ʿadāla* ('justice, integrity'), which is a psychological trait (*malaka nafsāniyya*) that restrains a person from committing major sins or from repeatedly committing minor ones (though they can still commit them occasionally without the loss of this trait). By contrast, *sakīna* prevents a person from committing any sins whatsoever, whether major or minor.

In the Qur'an, God associates this *sakīna* with Himself in a manner that

conveys a sense of exclusivity, similar to how He associates the spirit (*rūḥ*) with Himself, but He does not do the same for integrity. Moreover, He says that He 'sends down' (*inzāl*) composure, which means that it is something He possesses exclusively and bestows on a select few. In fact, some of the verses hint that He considers it to be one of His divine hosts (*junūd*): *It is He who sent down composure into the hearts of the faithful that they might enhance their faith. To Allah belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth*... (48:4).

On more than one occasion, God mentions *sakīna* alongside His hosts. For example, see the verse that appears later in this chapter, *then Allah sent down His composure upon him, and strengthened him with hosts you did not see* (9:40), and the verse presently under discussion, *then Allah sent down His composure upon His Messenger and upon the faithful, and He sent down hosts you did not see*.

From the context of these verses, it appears that these hosts are the angels that God sends down to the battlefield, or at least some of their number. The roles assigned to *sakīna* and the angels on the battlefield are to punish the disbelievers and to support and strengthen the faithful, as described in the verses of Sūrah Āl 'Imrān that recount the Battle of Uḥud and the opening of Sūrah al-Fatḥ. Interested readers can refer to the verses in those chapters to better understand the reality of the matter.

In our commentary on the verse, *bearing tranquillity* (sakīna) *from your Lord* (2:248), we have also discussed some of the aspects of divine composure that are relevant to the present topic.

ثُمَّ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

(9:27) ***Then Allah shall turn clemently after that to whomever He wishes. Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful.***

As we have mentioned on a number of occasions already, when the act of *tawba* is applied to God, this means that He turns to His servant, first with grace and the success of repentance, and then with forgiveness and clemency. On the other hand, when the act of *tawba* emanates from God's servant, this means that He turns to His lord in regret and repentance, and God does not turn to the one who has not yet turned towards Him.

Based on the context, the demonstrative pronoun in *after that* refers to what the previous verses have conveyed about the Muslims' error in placing their trust in something other than God, their sinfulness in turning their backs and fleeing from battle, and God sending down His composure and hosts and

punishing those who disbelieved.

In accordance with this, the phrase *whomever He wishes* includes both the Muslims and the disbelievers, for God has mentioned what both parties must do in order to earn His forgiveness. In the case of the disbelievers, this is to renounce their disbelief, while for the Muslims, it is to repent for their error and their sinfulness. There is no basis in the verse for restricting God's forgiveness to either group, because the clemency (*tawba*) mentioned in the verse is general and without qualification. Therefore, it cannot be said to be only for either the Muslims or the disbelievers, given that both groups have cause to repent.

Based on the above, the falsity of the following reading of the verse becomes evident:

Some commentators have argued that God's clemency here applies only to those whom He punished. They say: 'It means that God will turn clemently to whoever He wishes amongst the disbelievers following this worldly punishment and thereby guide them to the religion of Islam. These are the ones who have not been completely consumed by their ignorance, superstition, and idolatry. Therefore, they have not sealed their fate by persisting in their obstinacy and denial or by blindly sticking to their traditions.'

However, it will be evident to the reader that this restriction of the verse's meaning in this way is utterly baseless and unsupported by any evidence from the verse itself.

When God says, *then Allah shall turn clemently...*, this is to show that the door of repentance is always open and that the divine outpouring of grace, clemency, and forgiveness is unceasing and available to all people. This is the opposite of what is indicated by the previous verse, when it says, *then Allah sent down His composure*, as this points to something exclusive and restricted to a few.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَٰذَا ۚ وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيكُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنْ شَاءَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

(9:28) ***O you who have faith! The polytheists are indeed impure* (najas)*, so they should not approach the Holy Mosque after this year. Should you fear poverty* ('ayla)*, Allah will enrich you out of His grace, if He wishes. Indeed Allah is all-knowing, all-wise.***

In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī says: 'Najas (impure) refers to anything dirty. One can call a man or woman *najas* or a group of people *najas*, because it is an infinitive. When this word is used in conjunction with *rijs*, as one might say "*rijs nijs*"... *ʿayla* (poverty) means to be poor, the verb *yaʿīlu* means to be in need.'

Customary understanding (*al-fahm al-ʿurfī*) indicates that the ban on the idolaters entering the Holy Mosque should be read as an instruction to the faithful to prevent them from entering it. God explains the rationale for this ruling by saying that they are impure (*najas*), which suggests a kind of uncleanliness for them and a kind of purity and cleanliness for the Holy Mosque. However, whatever this means, it is not the same as the religious ruling to 'avoid physical contact with them with the presence of moisture' or the like.

After this year refers to the year 9 A.H., the year in which ʿAlī delivered the proclamation of repudiation that forbade people from circumambulating the House of God in the nude and from the idolaters making the Hajj pilgrimage again.

Should you fear poverty and what follows it means: 'if you fear that by implementing this divine ordinance you will be cut off from the Hajj and that your markets will be empty and you will lose business as a result, leaving you poor and destitute, then do not fear: God will enrich you out of His grace and keep you safe from the poverty of which you are afraid.'

This is a beautiful promise given by God to reassure the people of Mecca and all of those who did business there during the Hajj season. This promise did not only apply at that time, but continues to give glad tidings to the Muslims down to the present day, for the word of Islam triumphed, and its renown spread further with each passing year. By contrast, the idolaters faced the complete destruction of their way of life, for—aside from the handful of Arabs with whom the Prophet had made a treaty in the Holy Mosque, whose expiration came later—they only had four months' grace after the proclamation of repudiation. Hence, all of them were in the process of embracing Islam.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Kāfī*, it is narrated from ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm from one of his colleagues whose name he mentioned: When (the ʿAbbāsid caliph) al-Mutawakkil was poisoned, he made a vow (*nadhr*) that, if he recovered, he would give 'abundant wealth' (*māl kathīr*) in charity (*ṣadaqa*). When he recovered, he asked the jurists how much wealth would qualify as 'abundant.' One of them said: 'A hundred

thousand.' Another said: 'Ten thousand.' Each gave his own opinion, and al-Mutawakkil became confused.

One of his companions called Ṣafwān said: 'Why don't you send a message to this dark-skinned person and ask him about it?'

Al-Mutawakkil replied: 'Woe to you, who do you mean?'

Ṣadwān said: 'The descendant of (Imām) al-Riḍā.'

'Is he of any use in this situation?'

'If he gets you out of trouble, then you must grant me such-and-such, and if he doesn't, then swat me a hundred times.'

'Very well! O Jaʿfar b. Maḥmūd, go to Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad (Imām al-Hādī) and ask him how much wealth is "abundant wealth."'

So Jaʿfar b. Maḥmūd went and asked (Imām al-Hādī), who told him: 'Abundant is eighty.'

Jaʿfar said: 'Good sir, he will surely ask me for the basis of this verdict (*al-ʿilla*).'

Abū al-Ḥasan (al-Hādī) replied: 'God says in the Qur'an, *Allah has certainly helped you in many* (kathīr) *situations*, for we have enumerated those situations, and they number eighty.'

Author's comments: Al-Qummī narrates this in his *Tafsīr* as well, in which he gives the name of the anonymous 'colleague' in the chain of narrators as Muḥammad b. ʿAmr. The meaning of the narration is that the Arabic word *kathīr* (many, abundant) is used in the Qur'an to refer to eighty of something, not that the actual meaning of *kathīr* is eighty, as should be obvious.

(2) In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī quotes the experts of Qur'anic commentary and Prophetic biography as saying: When the Messenger of God conquered Mecca, he set out from it towards Ḥunayn in order to fight the Hawāzin and Thaqīf tribes at the end of Ramaḍān or in Shawwāl of the eighth year after the Emigration. The leaders of the Hawāzin had rallied around Mālik b. ʿAwf al-Naṣrī and marched forth with their property, women, and children and encamped at Awṭās.... Amongst them was Durayd b. al-Ṣimma, the leader of the Jusham tribe, and he was by this point advanced in years and had lost his sight to old age. He said: 'Which valley are you in?' They said: 'Awṭās.' He said: 'A good place for cavalry, neither too soft and slippery, nor too hard and uneven, but why is it that I hear the grunts of camels, the braying of donkeys, the lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep, and the crying of children?' They said: 'Mālik b. ʿAwf told people to

bring their children, their wealth, and their womenfolk, so that each of them would fight for his family and his property.' Durayd said: 'By the Lord of the Kaʿba, he had be better off as a shepherd.'

Then he said: 'Take me to Mālik.' And when they brought Durayd to him, he said: 'O Mālik! You have become the leader of your people, and this is not our last day on earth, so send your people to their highlands and then put your men on their horses, for nothing will avail you other than a man with his mount and blade. If it goes in your favour, your people will catch up, and if it should go against you, you will not have disgraced your nearest and dearest.'

But Mālik only replied: 'Your old age has cost you your knowledge and your good sense.'

The Messenger of God unfurled his greatest battle standard and entrusted it to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and he told everyone who had entered Mecca bearing a flag to carry it. He set out after having spent fifteen days in Mecca, and he sent word to Ṣafwān b. Umayya and asked to borrow a hundred shields from him.

Ṣafwān asked: 'As a loan, or do you mean to steal them from me?'

The Prophet replied: 'I wish to borrow them, and I guarantee their return.'

So Ṣafwān lent him a hundred shields before setting out himself. And two thousand of those who had converted to Islam following the conquest of Mecca also set out. The Prophet had entered Mecca with ten thousand men, and he marched forth to Ḥunayn with twelve thousand.

The Messenger of God sent one of his Companions as an envoy to Mālik b. ʿAwf. He arrived as Mālik was saying to his people: 'Let each man amongst you place his family and his property behind him, and break the scabbards of your swords! Lie in wait in the valley, and when the first light of morning appears on the horizon, attack as a single body and crush them, for Muḥammad has not yet encountered anyone who knew how to fight!'

Once the Messenger of God had offered prayers with his Companions in the morning, they advanced into the valley of Ḥunayn, and divisions of the Hawāzin attacked them from every direction. The Banū Sulaym tribe, who had been the Prophet's vanguard, retreated, and all of those behind them retreated too. And God left them to their enemies because they had become overconfident at their superior

numbers. All that remained was ʿAlī with the battle standard, fighting them with a small band of stalwarts, while the rest of the army fled past the Messenger of God without a second glance.

ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib held the reins of the Messenger of God's donkey, with his brother al-Faḍl to his right and Abū Sufyān b. al-Hārith b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib to his left, and Nawfal b. al-Ḥarīth and Rabīʿa b. al-Ḥarīth were there amongst a band of nine from the Banū Hāshim. They were joined by Ayman b. Umm Ayman. At that point, ʿAbbās recited:

We nine came to the aid of God's Messenger in battle / while all others had fled and scattered,
And while al-Faḍl struck out with his sword, I called out / to the others, 'O kinsmen!' that they might return,
The tenth of our number gave his life / but he did not lament for what he gained in God's service.

And when the Messenger of God saw his people deserting him, he told ʿAbbās, who was known for his loud voice, to summon them back. He called out: 'O you Emigrants and Helpers, O you who witnessed *al-Baqara's* revelation, O you who pledged allegiance beneath the tree, whence do you flee? This is the Messenger of God!'

And when the Muslims heard the voice of ʿAbbās, they returned to the fight calling out: 'We are coming! We are coming!' The Helpers in particular hasted back to the fray and fought the idolaters with renewed vigour, such that the Messenger of God remarked: 'Now the battle has truly begun, and I am the Prophet who does not lie. I am the scion of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib!' Then divine assistance came down from God and the Hawāzin routed and fled in all directions with the Muslims in hot pursuit.

Mālik b. ʿAwf fled the field and sought refuge behind the fortifications of Ṭāʾif. Close to a hundred of his people had been killed, and the Muslims captured much of their property and womenfolk. The Messenger of God ordered the captives and booty to be sent to Jiʿrāna, and he placed Badīl b. Warqāʾ al-Khuzāʿī in charge of them. The Prophet then set off in pursuit of the remnants of the enemy. He surrounded Ṭāʾif in pursuit of Mālik b. ʿAwf and besieged the city for the rest of the month. When Dhū al-Qaʿda set in, he withdrew to Jiʿrāna, where he divided the spoils of Ḥunayn and Awṭās.

Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab says: A man from the idolaters' side at the Battle of Ḥunayn told me: 'When we met the Companions of the Messenger of God in battle, they gave us no more resistance than milking a sheep. When we drove them back, we pursued them until we reached the man on the donkey'—meaning the Messenger of God—'suddenly we were met by men with bright faces who told us: "Go back, you of evil countenances!" So we fell back, whereat they pursued them, and they were "them"'—meaning they were angels.'
Al-Zuhrī says: I heard that Shayba b. ʿUthmān had said: 'I snuck up to the Messenger of God, intending to kill him to avenge the blood of Ṭalḥa b. ʿUthmān and ʿUthmān b. Ṭalḥa, who had been killed in the Battle of Uḥud, but God made His Messenger aware of my intentions. He turned to me and struck me in the chest, saying: "I seek refuge from you with God, O Shayba!" And, when I heard these words, my flanks began to tremble, and then I looked to this man who I had hated so intensely, but now I loved him more than my own sight and hearing. I cried out: "I bear witness that you are the Messenger of God, and that God informed you of what was in my soul!"'
The Messenger of God divided the spoils in Jiʿrāna, including the six thousand women and children of the Hawāzin he had captured, and camels and sheep beyond counting.
Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī says: The Messenger of God gave most of the spoils to those whose hearts needed to be reconciled (*muta'allifīn*, see 9:60) from the Quraysh and the rest of the Arabs, but he did not give the Helpers anything, whether a little or a lot. So, Saʿd b. ʿUbāda went to the Messenger of God and said: 'O Messenger of God, this group of the Helpers is upset by your division of the spoils amongst your own people and amongst all the other Arabs, without giving them anything.' The Prophet replied: 'And what are your thoughts on this, O Saʿd?' He said: 'I am but a man of my people.' So the Messenger of God said: 'Then gather your people for me in this field.' So he gathered them and the Messenger of God came out and stood up amidst them to deliver a speech. He began by praising God and magnifying Him, then he said:
'O gathering of Helpers, did I not find you astray, then God guided you? Did I not find you impoverished, then God enriched you? Did I not find you enemies of one another, then God brought your hearts together?'

They answered: 'Yes, O Messenger of God!'
He continued: 'Will you not answer me, O gathering of Helpers?'
They said: 'What should we say? How should we answer you? The bounty belongs to God and His Messenger!'
So, the Messenger of God said: 'By God, had you wished, you could have said, truthfully: "You came to us an outcast, and we sheltered you! You came to us in need and we supported you! You came to us fearful, and we protected you! And you came to us betrayed by your own people, and we came to your aid!"'
They replied: 'The bounty belongs to God and His Messenger!'
Then, the Messenger of God said: 'You are upset, O gathering of Helpers, because of some trinkets of this world, which I have given to others to reconcile their hearts to Islam, while I have left you to what God has apportioned for you because of Islam. Will you not be satisfied, O gathering of Helpers, that while the rest of the Arabs shall leave with sheep and camels, you shall leave with the Messenger of God in your midst? For by He in whose hand is my soul, if all of mankind go into one valley, and the Helpers go into another valley, I will go into the valley of the Helpers! And were it not for the fact of my Emigration, I too would call myself a man from the Helpers. O God! Have mercy on the Helpers, upon the children of the Helpers, and upon the children of the children of the Helpers!' Whereat those assembled wept until their beards were soaked with tears, and they said: 'We are pleased with the apportionment of God and His Messenger!' Then they dispersed.
Anas b. Mālik says: On the Day of Awṭās, the Messenger of God appointed a caller to announce: 'Lo! Let no one lay a hand upon a pregnant woman until she gives birth and let no one lay a hand upon a woman who is not pregnant until she has had her menses.'
Then a delegation from the Hawāzin tribe came to the Messenger of God in Jiʿrāna, having submitted to Islam, to ransom their captives. Their speaker stood up and said: 'O Messenger of God! Amongst the women you have captured are your maternal aunts and wet-nurses who nursed you when you were a child. If we had faced Ibn Abī Shir or al-Nuʿmān b. al-Mundhir (two kings of the Arabs) and suffered from them the like of which we suffered from you, we would have held out hope for their clemency and generosity, and you are the best of those who have been nursed (by us).' Then he recited some

verses of poetry.

The Messenger of God said: 'Which is dearer to you: The captives or your property?' They said: 'O Messenger of God, you have given us the choice between lineage and property, and lineage is dearer to us. We are not here for sheep or camels.' So the Messenger of God said: 'Whatever is the share of the Banū Hāshim is yours, and I will speak to the other Muslims on your behalf and intercede for you. So speak to them and make known your embrace of Islam.'

So, after the Messenger of God had offered his *ẓuhr* prayers, the Hawāzin got up and addressed the Muslims. Then the Prophet said: 'I have already returned the share that belonged to the Banū Hāshim, and by He in whose hand is my soul, whoever amongst you would like to grant them their request without feeling compelled to do so, then let him do so. And whoever dislikes to grant them their request, then let them accept a payment of ransom, and I will pay their ransom for them.' At this, the people gave over their share of the captives to the Hawāzin, save for a few who asked for a ransom to be paid.

The Messenger of God sent word to Mālik b. ʿAwf: 'If you come to me as a Muslim, I will return to you your family and your property and I will give you a hundred she-camels besides.' So Mālik came out of Ṭāʾif to meet the Prophet, and the latter returned to him his family and his property and granted him a hundred camels besides. Then, he appointed him as his agent over those of his people who had embraced Islam.

Author's comments: al-Qummī narrates a similar account in his *Tafsīr*, except that he does not narrate the poetry that is ascribed to the Prophet during the battle. The same is true of what is narrated by specific authorities such as al-Musayyib, al-Zuhrī, Anas, and Abī Saʿīd. And accounts with the same content have been narrated via numerous routes in Sunnī works.

ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī's narration contains an additional section that reads as follows:

ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm says: When the Messenger of God saw his army in retreat, he galloped in a circle on his donkey with his word drawn and said: 'O ʿAbbās, go up this hill and call out: 'O you who witnessed *al-Baqara*'s revelation, O you who pledged allegiance beneath the tree, whence do you flee? This is the Messenger of God!'

Then the Messenger of God raised his hand and said: 'O God! Yours is the praise, Yours is the thanks, to You I complain, and You are

the helper!' Then Gabriel descended from the heavens and said: 'O Messenger of God, you have invoked God with the invocation of Moses son of 'Imrān when God split the sea for him and saved him from Pharaoh!'

Then the Messenger of God said to Abū Sufiyān b. Ḥārith: 'Give me a handful of pebbles!' So he gave him the pebbles and the Prophet threw them into the faces of the idolaters and said: 'Evil countenances!' Then he raised his head towards the sky and said: 'O God! If this band perishes You will not be worshipped, and if You wish not to be worshipped, then You will not be worshipped!'

When the Helpers heard the call of 'Abbās, they rallied, broke the sheathes of their swords, and called out: 'We are coming!' They rushed past the Messenger of God, for they were too ashamed to go back to him directly and went to the battle standard instead. The Messenger of God said to 'Abbās: 'Who are they, O Abū al-Faḍl?' He said: 'O Messenger of God, they are the Helpers!' The Messenger of God said: 'Now the battle has truly begun!' Then divine assistance came down from the heavens and the Hawāzin were routed.

(3) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is narrated by Abū al-Shaykh from Muḥammad b. 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Umayr al-Laythī that: There were four thousand Helpers with the Prophet (when he entered Mecca), a thousand from the Juhayna tribe, a thousand from the Muzīna tribe, a thousand from the Aslam, a thousand from the Ghaffār, a thousand from the Ashja', and a thousand of the Emigrants and others. Therefore, he had ten thousand. He set out (for Ḥunayn) with twelve thousand. About them, God says in His Book: '*and on the day of Ḥunayn, when your great number impressed you, but it did not avail you in any way*.'

(4) In the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām, he narrates from Ibn Isḥāq: When the people fled and the newly-converted Meccans with the Messenger of God saw this, some amongst them gave voice to their rancour. Abū Sufiyān b. Ḥarb said: 'They won't stop running until they reach the sea.' It is said he had brought arrows used for divination with him in his quiver on that day. Jabala b. al-Ḥanbal (or, according to Ibn Hishām, Kalada b. al-Ḥanbal), who was with his brother Ṣafwān b. Umayya, a polytheist to whom the Prophet had granted an extended period of grace, called out: 'See how the magic has failed today!' But Ṣafwān told him: 'Be quiet, may God break your mouth, for I swear

by God that I would rather be ruled by a man of the Quraysh than a man of the Hawāzin!'

Ibn Isḥāq narrates: Shayba b. ʿUthmān b. Abī Ṭalḥa, who was from the Banū ʿAbd al-Dār family said: 'Today I shall have my revenge!' For his father had been slain at Uḥud. 'Today I will kill Muḥammad!' He narrates: 'So I went after the Messenger of God to kill him, but then something came over me and I could not do it. Suddenly, I knew that I had lost the power to do it.'

A list of those martyred at Ḥunayn:

In the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām, Ibn Isḥāq says:

These are the names of the Muslims who were martyred at the Battle of Ḥunayn:

From the Quraysh: Ayman b. ʿUbayd of the Banū Hāshim; Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā and Yazīd b. Zumʿa b. al-Aswad b. al-Muṭṭalib of the Banī Asad—the latter's horse, which was called Jināḥ, bolted and he was slain.

From the Helpers: Surāqa b. al-Ḥārith b. ʿUdayy of the Banū al-ʿAjalān, and Abū ʿĀmir of the Ashʿarī clan.

Author's comments: As for those who did not flee but stood firm with the Messenger of God, some narrations say there were three of them, others say four, others say nine, with Ayman b. ʿUbayd as the tenth—and he is also known as Ibn Umm Ayman—others still say eighty, and some say 'less than a hundred.'

The most reliable of these accounts is what has been related by the Prophet's uncle ʿAbbās, namely that there were nine of them and the tenth was Ayman, who recited some verses of poetry that we have already mentioned. This is the most reliable account because ʿAbbās remained by the Prophet's side throughout the battle and saw events unfold in front of him clearly. He was the one who called out to those retreating, reminded them of their duty to the Prophet, and recited rousing verses of poetry.

It is also possible that some of the Muslims held their ground for a little while longer before fleeing, or that some of those who fled came to their senses, returned to the fight before the others, and rallied around the battle standard and, in doing so, came to be accounted amongst those who stood firm and fought. Of course, the Battle of Ḥunayn was a protracted engagement, with much back-and-forth, and this means that information about events will not always be clear and orderly.

Some say the most accurate account of events is that eighty men stood firm

with the Prophet. This is narrated from ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd, and Ibn ʿUmar's narration that there were 'less than a hundred' who stood their ground also originates from this. They argue that because these two figures were memorizers of events and traditions, their version of events is more authoritative.

There is no dispute that the account of someone who memorizes events and traditions should be treated as more reliable than the account of someone who does not. However, the problem with this argument is that memorizing events in the heat of battle is not the same as memorizing them at other times. Therefore, we cannot rely on such accounts without some external corroboration of their validity. Of the narrators, only ʿAbbās has the requisite qualities to have witnessed and preserved this story accurately and in its entirety.

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Verses 29–35

These verses command the Muslims to fight the People of the Book so that they pay the tribute (*jizya*); they also mention different aspects of how the People of the Book have strayed from the truth in both belief and practice.

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّىٰ يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

(9:29) ***Fight those who do not have faith in Allah nor in the Last Day, nor forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, nor practise the religion of truth, from among those who were given the Book, until they pay the tribute out of hand, being humbled.***

Based on numerous Qur'anic verses, the People of the Book (or *Ahl al-Kitāb*) are the Jews and the Christians, as are the Zoroastrians, according to the verse: *Indeed the faithful, the Jews, the Sabaeans, the Christians, the Magians and the polytheists—Allah will indeed judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed Allah is witness to all things* (22:17). This is because the verse enumerates all of the heavenly religions[1] in contrast to the idolaters. As we have already mentioned, the Sabeans were a sect of Zoroastrians who were influenced by Judaism and adopted a syncretic system of beliefs based on both traditions.

The context of the verse indicates that the word 'from' (*min*) in the phrase '*from among those who were given the Book*' is used for exposition (*bayān*) rather than division (*tabʿīḍ*).[2] This is because the Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians

1 In other words, heavenly revelations and it should not be misconstrued to mean "different religions". (Pub.)

2 In other words, '*from among those who were given the Book*' does not mean that there is a group within the People of the Book who '*do not have faith in Allah nor in the Last Day, nor forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, nor practise the religion of truth*,' which is what would be implied if '*from*' was used

are each single communities of faith like the Muslims, even if they have divided into different branches, split into different sects, and intermingled with one another. If, on the other hand, the verse had meant to say that only some of the People of the Book were to be fought while all of them were required to pay tribute, or that only those of them who were to be fought should pay the tribute, the verse would have needed to include further explanation to convey this meaning.

When God says, *from among those who were given the Book*, this is an exposition of the phrase immediately before it, *those who do not have faith in Allah*. Therefore, the descriptions given in the verse apply to the entirety of the People of the Book.

There are three attributes God singles out for mention here: They do not believe in God or the Last Day, they do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden, and they do not follow the religion of truth.

As for the first attribute, *those who do not have faith in Allah nor in the Last Day*, how can this be reconciled with what God has said elsewhere in the Qur'an? For example, He describes the Jews and Christians as 'People of the Book,' which means they believe in a holy book that has been sent down from God to one of His messengers. Then, there are hundreds of verses in the Qur'an which quote them either affirming their belief in God or saying things that show they believe in God.

Equally, there are verses which show they believed in the Last Day as well. For instance: *And they say, 'The Fire shall not touch us except for a number of days'* (2:80); or: *And they say, 'No one shall enter paradise except one who is a Jew or a Christian'* (2:111).

However, God does not distinguish in the Qur'an between believing in Him and believing in the Last Day, for denying the Last Day means denying God and denying God means denying the Last Day. Likewise, He says that anyone who distinguishes between believing in Him and His messengers, believing in one but not the other, is also a disbeliever: *Those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and seek to separate Allah from His messengers, and say, 'We believe in some and disbelieve in some' and seek to take a way in between, it is they who are truly faithless, and We have prepared for the faithless a humiliating punishment* (4:150–1).

Therefore, because the People of the Book do not believe in the

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to signify division. Instead, because it is expository, it means that this description refers to all the People of the Book, as Ṭabāṭabā'ī elaborates below. (Trans.)

prophethood of Muḥammad, they are, in fact, disbelievers, even if they believe in God and the Last Day. Note that the Qur'an does not say that they denied one of God's signs, namely prophethood, rather it says that they disbelieved in God and the Last Day, just as the idolaters are classed as disbelievers in God because they were not monotheists, even if they accepted the existence of a supreme deity.

So, even while they affirm the Creator and the Resurrection, they do so in a way that does not fully accord with the truth. For example, by saying that Jesus is the Son of God, or that Ezra is the Son of God, they are akin to the idolaters and polytheists who say that there is a deity that is the parent of other deities. Similar to this is the belief of the Jews that they will only be punished for a short time and the belief of the Christians that Christ's sacrifice has absolved them of their sins.

Therefore, when God says that the People of the Book do not believe in Him or the Last Day, it appears that this is because they do not perceive the truths of monotheism and the Resurrection, even if they affirm their belief in God. This is because, according to the Qur'an's own account, some of them espouse doctrines that contradict God's divinity or contradict the Resurrection (although the Torah today does not contain any mention of the Resurrection whatsoever).

The second attribute assigned to them in this verse is that they do not *forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden*. This refers to the things that the Jews consider permissible that the Qur'an enumerates in Sūrah al-Baqarah, Sūrah al-Nisā', and elsewhere, or that the Christians consider wine and the flesh of swine permissible even though they are both forbidden in the teachings of Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad and their embezzling people's wealth falsely, of which they are accused in the subsequent verse: *Indeed many of the scribes and monks wrongfully eat up the people's wealth* (9:34).

The word *messenger* (rasūl) in the phrase *nor forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden* could refer to their own messengers who they accept, such as Moses for the Jews and Jesus for the Christians. In this case, it means that each of the two nations does not forbid itself what their own messenger forbade them, even though they recognise him as a messenger and affirm their belief in the truth of his message. And this is an act of brazen disrespect for God and His messenger and an example of their treating the truth like a plaything.

Alternatively, '*messenger*' could refer to the Prophet Muḥammad, whose mission they find prophesied in their own scriptures, the Torah and the

Evangel, and who permits them all good things, forbids them only from uncleanliness, and removes the shackles and fetters that were upon them. In this case, the Qur'an calls attention to their failure to forbid what God and His Messenger had declared forbidden in order to reprimand and criticise them. It is also to encourage the faithful to fight against them for disregarding what God and His Messenger had forbidden in their religion and for disrespecting God's boundaries.

This second reading is perhaps supported by the fact that if, when God said '*messenger*,' he meant the messenger of each nation, such as Moses for the Jews and Jesus for the Christians, then it would have been more befitting to say, 'They do not forbid what God and His messengers forbade,' which is the habit of the Qur'an in such contexts, because this points to the multitude of messengers. For example, see the following verses:

They... seek to separate Allah from His messengers (4:150)
Their messengers said, 'Is there any doubt about Allah...?' (14:10)
Their messengers brought them manifest proofs (10:13).

Because the Christians rejected the prohibitions of the Torah and the Evangel, they did not forbid what either Moses or Jesus had forbidden, and if this is what is meant by the verse then it would not be correct to say that they did not *forbid what Allah and His Messenger* (singular) *have forbidden*.

Moreover, when one reflects on the general aims of Islam, they will have no doubt that the ordinance to fight the People of the Book until they pay tribute (*jizya*) was not revealed to bring worldly benefit to the Muslims and their allies or so that they could live lives of luxury and enjoyment in the manner of the kings and noblemen of different nations. On the contrary, the goal of the religion is to make truth, justice, and piety triumph over falsehood, tyranny, and immorality. This is so that people will not be distracted by transitory desires on their journey towards God, so they can receive a beneficial moral education without being led astray by false teachings, and so they do not find themselves being pulled in different directions. Otherwise, the human order would collapse. Of course, if one or more people do not want to receive the teachings of Islam, then they should be allowed to be free to choose their own religion, so long as it is a religion of monotheism, such as Judaism, Christianity, or Zoroastrianism, and so long as they do not oppose Islam openly. This shows the utmost justice and fairness of the religion of truth that triumphs over all others.

As for the tribute—or *jizya*—this is a monetary tax taken from them in return for maintaining their protected status—or *dhimma*—and to look

after their needs, and this sort of taxation is something no government can do without, whether it is based on truth or falsehood.

From the above explanation, it is evident that what is meant by these forbidden things are those things forbidden in Islam, which God has determined should not be allowed to spread within global Islamic society, and what is meant by *the religion of truth* (dīn al-ḥaqq) is the teachings that God has determined should be followed in that society.

Therefore, these forbidden things are those that have been forbidden by God and His Messenger Muḥammad, who brought the message of Islam to the world, and the three attributes that are mentioned in the verse— *who do not have faith in Allah nor in the Last Day*, and so on—are intended explain the rationale for fighting the People of the Book.

This, in turn, demonstrates the error of those who argue: 'It is irrational for the People of the Book to forbid themselves those things that God and His Messenger have forbidden to us, unless they embrace Islam, as this verse is about the People of the Book, not sinful Muslims.'

The answer to this argument is that the goal of fighting them is not that they forbid what Islam has forbidden while still following their own religion, rather it is that they do not openly do things that Islam has forbidden in society without there being some barrier to prevent these spreading or to prevent others from doing them without restraint, such as openly drinking wine, eating the flesh of swine, embezzling the money of others. Therefore, the purpose of fighting them is so that they come under Islam's protection (*dhimma*) and do not openly perform such acts in public. This means that the evil of these acts is contained amongst themselves only.

Perhaps this is what the verse means when it says they should *pay the tribute out of hand, being humbled* (wa hum ṣāghirūn), as we will discuss when we come to the end of the verse.

The third attribute of theirs that God highlights is that they do not *practise the religion of truth*, meaning they do not take it as their own religion or way of life.

However, the possessive construct, *dīn al-ḥaqq* (lit. 'religion of truth'), is not a case of placing a noun in a possessive construct with its adjective, which would render the meaning 'the religion of truth.' On the contrary, this is a literal possessive construct, meaning the religion that belongs to the truth, because it embodies the truth that God has decreed for humankind and propels them towards it; it guides people to the truth and those who follow it reach the truth. Therefore, the phrase 'religion of truth' is similar in meaning to 'the

path of truth' (*ṭarīq al-ḥaqq*) or 'the path of error' (*ṭarīq al-ḍalāl*) in the sense that these are routes that lead to truth or error, meaning that the destination of the former path is the truth, while the destination of the latter is error.

This meaning can be grasped form other verses of the Qur'an, such as: *So set your countenance upon the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of Allah according to which He originated mankind. There is no altering Allah's creation; that is the upright religion, but most people do not know* (30:30); and: *Indeed, with Allah religion is Islam* (3:19). These and other verses like them all affirm that the teachings of this religion are rooted in the fundamental realities of the cosmos, which the Prophet calls people towards and bids them to follow. Adopting these teachings as a way of life is called 'submission to God' (*islām lillāh*). Therefore, the Prophet is calling humanity to something that they have no excuse not to accept and submit to, namely following the practical moral programme towards which the very realities of the cosmos point. Or, to put it another way, submitting to God's moral will (*al-irādā al-tashrīʿiyya*) stems from submitting to his cosmic will (*al-irāda al-takwīniyya*).

In short, objective reality has a religion and a way of life that emanates from it and calls people towards it just as falsehood and error have a religion that they call towards. The former is following the truth, while the latter is following one's own desires: *Had the Truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth would have surely fallen apart* (23:71).

Therefore, when we refer to Islam as 'the religion of truth' (*dīn al-ḥaqq*), this means that its teachings are rooted in the cosmic order, that its path corresponds with the realities of creation, and that we are drawn towards it by the God-given nature (*fiṭra*), with which all human beings are endowed. *There is no altering Allah's creation; that is the upright religion*.

From the above, we can conclude the following:

Firstly, that when the Qur'an says the People of the Book do not believe in God or the Last Day, this means they have not adopted the faith that is acceptable to God; when it says they do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden, this means they do not care about openly committing sins that are harmful to human society and that undermine the efforts of the government of truth that rules over it; and when it says they do not follow the religion of truth, this means that they do not follow the true way of life that is in harmony with both their own God-given nature and with the fundamental realities of the cosmos.

Secondly, that when God says, *those who do not have faith in Allah nor in the Last Day*—along with the other attributes He assigns to them—this is

intended to explain the rationale behind the command to fight them, while also giving the Muslims encouragement and motivation to do so.

Thirdly, that this refers to fighting the People of the Book altogether, not only some of them, as the preposition '*from*' (min) in the phrase '*from among those who were given the Book*' is for exposition (*bayān*) rather than division (*tabʿīḍ*).

As for the end of the verse: ...*until they pay the tribute* (jizya) *out of hand, being humbled* (ṣāghirūn), al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says in his *Mufradāt*: '*Jizya* is the payment taken from the Protected Peoples (*ahl al-dhimma*). It is called *jizya* because it is given in repayment for their safety and legal protection.'

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes: '*Jizya* is a noun on the pattern of *fiʿla* that is derived from the verb *jazā*, *yajzī* ("to repay, to compensate"), like *ʿiqda* or *jilsa*, and it is a tax that they pay in recompense for their remaining disbelievers, as a penalty. This is narrated from ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā.'

Al-Rāghib's interpretation appears more reliable because it is confirmed by what we have already said previously about *jizya* being a tax paid in return for their protection and the provision of services to them.

Al-Rāghib also says: '*Ṣughr* (smallness) and *kibr* (largeness) are relative opposites, where their usage always implies a comparison. For example, something might be small compared to one thing but large compared to something else... however, smallness (*ṣighr*) can also be used to denote abasement (*dhilla*), equally one can be said to be 'small' (*ṣāghir*) if they are satisfied with a low station: ...*until they pay the tribute* (jizya) *out of hand* (ʿan yad)*, being humbled* (ṣāghirūn).'

Based on the attributes of the People of the Book that were mentioned at the beginning of the verse, which provided the rationale for fighting them, and the mention of them paying tribute in exchange for protection and security at its end, it appears that '*humbled*' (*ṣāghirūn*) means that they have submitted themselves to the Islamic way of life and the just religious government of Islamic society. Therefore, they will not compete with the Muslims for precedence in that society or oppose them by propagating their own desires in the form of their false doctrines and practices that are harmful to human society. At the same time, paying this tribute out of hand, as specified by the verse, symbolizes this inferiority.

Therefore, based on the apparent meaning of the verse, the meaning of *humbled* is not that the Muslims or the agents of the religious government should humiliate or mock them, for this is utterly beneath the dignity of Islam, even if some commentators on the Qur'an have suggested this meaning.

The word *yad* ('hand') literally denotes the human limb but can also refer to a person's power or blessings. If the word '*hand*' in *until they pay the tribute out of hand* is used in the literal sense, then this means: 'until they pay the tribute out of their hand and into yours.' If, on the other hand, it is used in the second sense, then this means: 'until they pay the tribute because of your power and authority over them and they are humbled, meaning they are neither obstinate nor arrogant toward you.'

Therefore, the meaning of the full verse is as follows: 'Fight the People of the Book, because they do not believe in God and the Last Day in a way that is acceptable to God and which has not deviated from the right path; nor do they forbid those things that Islam has forbidden because they are harmful to human society; nor do they follow a religion that is in harmony with the divinely instituted cosmic order of things. So, fight them and continue to fight them until you have cowed them and they submit to your authority and they pay you the financial tribute you impose upon them that is commensurate with their inferior status. Spend this tribute on providing them with security, maintaining their safety, and managing their affairs.'

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عُزَيْرٌ ابْنُ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ۖ ذَٰلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۖ يُضَاهِئُونَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ أَنَّىٰ يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

(9:30) ***The Jews say, 'Ezra is the son of Allah,' and the Christians say, 'Christ is the son of Allah.' That is an opinion that they mouth, imitating*** **(yuḍāhi'ūn)** ***the opinions of the faithless of former times. May Allah assail them, where do they stray*** **(yu'fakūn)***?*

Muḍāhāt ('imitation') means to emulate or mimic something.

According to al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *ifk* ('straying') refers to anything that has been diverted from its proper course. Hence, *yu'fakūn* here means that they have been diverted in their beliefs from truth to falsehood.

The Jews say, 'Ezra is the son of Allah': The Arabic name for Ezra is 'Uzayr; its pronunciation changed when it entered Arabic. The same is true of Yeshua (Jesus), which became 'Īsā, and Yochanan (John), which became Yaḥyā.

Ezra was the reviver of the Jewish faith who gathered the books of the Torah and wrote them as a single book after they had been lost when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, conquered their land. He had destroyed

their temple; burned their books; massacred their men; and enslaved their women, children, and the weak, and taken them back to Babylon, where they remained in captivity for close to a century. When Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Babylon, Ezra went to him to intercede on behalf of his people. Because Cyrus held Ezra in some esteem, he allowed him to return with his people to their homeland and to reproduce the Torah for them. Historians say that this transpired around the year 457 B.C. So, the Torah compiled by Ezra spread amongst the Israelites. However, it was lost once again in around 161 B.C. when the Seleucid king Antiochus VI conquered their lands and persecuted them, razing their homes, burning their books, and massacring all who he could lay his hands upon.

In any case, the great service that Ezra performed for the Israelites meant that he was greatly revered and respected amongst them, to the extent that they called him 'the Son of God.' It is not clear whether they meant this in the same sense as the Christians did for Jesus—in the sense that he contained some substance of divinity, or that he was an emanation of God, or that he was one and the same as God—or whether this was merely a term of respect and veneration, as when they say: *we are Allah's sons and His beloved ones* (5:18). However, the context of the following verse—*They have taken their scribes and their monks as lords besides Allah, and also Christ, Mary's son* (9:31)—would seem to suggest the latter was the case, as we shall discuss.

Some commentators on the Qur'an have said that the claim that Ezra was the son of God was only made by some of the Jews at the time of the Prophet, not by all of them. Equally, it was only some Jews in Medina at the time of the Prophet who said: *Allah is poor and we are rich* (3:181); and *Allah's hand is tied up* (5:64). However, God ascribes these words to them in general because there were others who tacitly approved of the word and deeds of others because, in reality, they were all of the same opinion and orientation.

... and the Christians say, 'Christ is the son of Allah': This is a doctrine of the Christians. We have already discussed this in our treatment of the story of Jesus in Sūrah Āl 'Imrān.

... imitating the opinions of the faithless of former times: This passage calls attention to the fact that their claim that Jesus was the son of God mimicked the beliefs of earlier disbelieving nations who worshipped idols and who believed in some deities who were parents of others, such that there were fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, sons, and daughters amongst the gods. The same is true of the doctrine of the trinity, which bears a resemblance to the teachings of the polytheistic religions of ancient Egypt, India, and China. We

have already discussed this in our commentary on the story of Jesus in Sūrah Āl ʿImrān.

We have also mentioned there how the beliefs of polytheists and idolaters found their way into the Christian and Jewish faiths, which is something the Qur'an alludes to in the present verse when it accuses them of *imitating the opinions of the faithless of former times*.

Many contemporary scholars have examined the influences of the Buddhist and Hindu faiths on the contents of the Tanakh (or Old Testament) and the New Testament, and they have found instances where the teachings of these scriptures follow those of Buddhism and Hinduism almost step-by-step—even many of the stories and parables contained in the New Testament. Therefore, no one can be in doubt that the Qur'an is accurate in its description of them as '*imitating*.'

Then the Qur'an closes the verse by invoking a prayer against them, *May Allah assail them*.

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَٰهًا وَاحِدًا ۖ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

(9:31) ***They have taken their scribes*** **(aḥbār)** ***and their monks*** **(ruhbān)** ***as lords besides Allah, and also Christ, Mary's son; though they were commanded to worship only the One Allah, there is no Allah except Him; immaculate is He above the partners that they ascribe!***

Aḥbār ('scribes') is the plural of *ḥibr* (also spelled *ḥabr*) and denotes a scholar; it is commonly used to denote Jewish scholars. *Ruhbān* ('monks') is the plural of *rāhib* and it refers to those who don robes of piety. It is commonly used to denote Christian ascetics.

When the Qur'an accuses the Jews and Christians of taking their scribes and monks as lords besides God, this means that they listen to them and obey them unquestioningly, when only God is worthy of such obedience.

As for their taking Jesus son of Mary as a lord besides God, this is because the Christians ascribe divinity to him in the way that is common to most Christian sects. The Qur'an refers to Jesus as the 'son of Mary' to emphasise his humanity and show the error of the Christians worshipping him as God when, in fact, he is a man born of a woman like any other.

Note the difference between the way in which the Jews and the Christians

take their scribes and monks as lords besides God and the way in which the Christians take Jesus as a lord besides God. This is why the Qur'an has mentioned the two separately, beginning with the scribes and monks, then adding: *and also Christ, Mary's son*.

Moreover, in the same way that the verse indicates that there are two different conceptions of lordship (*rubūbiyya*) at work here, it highlights that there are two different conceptions of divine sonship (*bunuwwa*) present as well: In the case of Ezra, this is meant as an honorary sonship (*bunuwwa tashrīfiyya*), whereas in the case of Jesus it is meant somewhat literally. This distinction is brought into view by the fact that the present verse accuses the Christians of turning Jesus into a lord besides God, but it does not do the same to the Jews with regard to Ezra, mentioning only that they took their scribes and monks as lords besides God.

Therefore, Ezra could only be a lord (*rabb*) in their eyes if this was implied by his being a 'son of God' or because he was a scribe and he had performed a virtually incomparable service to their faith by restoring it after it had been destroyed. As for Jesus, when the Christians refer to him as the 'son of God,' they mean this in a different sense entirely.

...though they were commanded to worship only one Allah: This sentence is adverbial, meaning: 'They took them as lords even though *they were commanded to worship only the One Allah*.'

This statement shows, first of all, that taking someone as a lord by obeying them is the same as taking someone as a lord by worshipping them. To obey someone unquestioningly is to worship them, therefore, it follows that a lord who is obeyed absolutely and unconditionally is tantamount to a god (*ilāh*), for a god is one who is worshipped and who is worthy of worship. This is illustrated by the fact that God says, *though they were commanded to worship only one Allah*, which substitutes 'lord' (*rabb*) for 'god.' On the other hand, if there was a distinction between the two, it would have been more appropriate to say: 'though they were commanded to take only one lord.' This shows that taking someone as a lord by giving them your absolute obedience is the same as taking them as a lord by making them an object of worship, in both cases you are taking them as a deity besides God.

Second, it shows that when the Qur'an calls on people to worship God alone—for example, in the verses: *There is no Allah except Me; so worship Me* (21:25); *So do not invoke any Allah besides Allah* (26:213); and others—this not only means to restrict worship (*ʿibāda*) to God in the conventional sense of the word, it also means to restrict obedience (*ṭāʿa*) to Him. This is evident

from the Qur'an, because it rebukes them for their blind obedience to their scribes and monks by saying: *though they were commanded to worship only one Allah*, and nothing else.

This reading is further supported by the verse: *Did I not exhort you, O children of Adam, saying: 'Do not worship Satan. He is indeed your manifest enemy. Worship Me. That is a straight path'?* (36:61). And behind this door lies a thousand others.

As for His saying: ...*there is no Allah except Him*, this represents the completion of the message of the previous phrase, *though they were commanded to worship only one Allah*, as even though the idol worshippers believed in the existence of a multitude of gods, some of them would only worship one of these. However, worshipping only one god is not monotheism unless you also believe that there is no god besides him.

Hence, this verse deals with both forms of worship at the same time while still acknowledging the differences between them. It also shows that the way in which human beings must submit to God is by dedicating both forms of worship to Him. For example, God commands His Prophet to summon the People of the Book to worship Him with the following: *Say, 'O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you: that we will worship no one but Allah, and that we will not ascribe any partner to Him, and that we will not take each other as lords besides Allah.' But if they turn away, say, 'Be witnesses that we are those who submit to Allah'* (3:64).

The coda of the verse, *immaculate is He above the partners that they ascribe*, declares that He is exalted above their claims of lordship for their scribes and monks, or indeed their associating Jesus with him as a partner in divinity.

Therefore, the present verse serves as an explanation of the earlier statement, *those who do not have faith in Allah nor in the Last Day* (9:29). After all, the fact that they have taken a god or gods besides God is not compatible with truly believing in Him nor in believing in the Last Day, on which there will be no sovereignty besides God's.

يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يُتِمَّ نُورَهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

(9:32) ***They desire to put out*** **(yuṭfiʾū)** ***the light of Allah with their mouths*** **(bi afwāhihim)*****, but Allah is intent on perfecting His light though the faithless should be averse.***

Yuṭfi'ū ('to put out') means to extinguish a light or a flame, and the preposition *bi* in *bi afwāhihim* ('with their mouths') signifies the means or the reason by which they extinguish this light.

The verse mentions their mouths because people blow through their mouths in order to extinguish a lamp or candle. In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes: 'This is an example of eloquent speech because it belittles them and exposes the feebleness of their efforts, as one can only affect the weakest of lights with one's mouth rather than great blazes.'

In *al-Kashshāf*, al-Zamakhsharī says: 'Their efforts to refute the prophethood of Muḥammad through their denials are akin to someone trying to extinguish a light that illuminates the horizon and that God wishes to increase so that it reaches its full brightness and brilliance by blowing on it.' Therefore, the verse illustrates powerfully the condition of the Islamic mission at this point in history as well as what the faithless aimed to do to it. Likewise, the verse also contains a beautiful promise from God that He will complete His light in spite of their efforts.

هُوَ الَّذِی أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

(9:33) ***It is He who has sent His Messenger with the guidance* (hudā)** ***and the religion of truth* (dīn al-ḥaqq)*, that He may make it prevail over all religions, though the polytheists should be averse.***

Hudā ('guidance') refers to the divine guidance that was sent down with the Messenger of God to guide mankind by God's command; the *dīn al-ḥaqq* ('religion of truth') is Islam, insofar as the teachings and rules of Islam correspond to objective reality.

Hence, this verse means that God is the one who sent His Messenger—Muḥammad—with guidance—in the form of clear signs and manifest proofs—and the religion of human nature (*fiṭra*), that He might make His religion—which is the religion of truth—triumph over all other religions, even if the idol worshippers are averse to this.

Based on this, it is plain that the pronoun '*it*' in the phrase '*make it prevail*' refers to *the religion of truth*, which is also indicated by the context. Some commentators might suggest that the pronoun actually refers to the Prophet—as in, 'make <u>him</u> prevail'—in which case it would mean: 'To make His Messenger victorious and educate him with all the teachings of the religion.' However,

this is an extremely unlikely meaning for the verse.

Together, this and the previous verse clearly encourage the faithful to fight the People of the Book and indicate that this is a religious duty they must carry out. Both verses show that God wishes this religion to spread to all mankind, and this requires effort and struggle. At the same time, the People of the Book wish to extinguish this divine light with their mouths, so there is no option but to fight them until they are no more or until they hasten to pay tribute and submit themselves. After all, God will not accept any outcome other than to complete His light, and He wants this religion to triumph over all religions. It is God's will that the Muslims should triumph over their enemies. Therefore, they should not slacken or grieve, for they have the upper hand, if they are truly believers.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنَ الْأَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٤﴾

(9:34) ***O you who have faith! Indeed many of the scribes and monks wrongfully eat up the people's wealth, and bar from the way of Allah. And those who treasure up gold and silver, and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give tidings to them of a painful punishment.***

It appears that this verse is an explanation of what was said at the beginning of this section: *nor forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, nor practise the religion of truth* (9:29), in the same way that the previous verse provided an explanation of the clause immediately before it: *those who do not have faith in Allah nor in the Last Day*.

This verse explains *nor forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden* by saying: *Indeed many of the scribes and monks wrongfully eat up the people's wealth*. In doing so, it provides the most egregious and persuasive example of how they corrupt human society and undermine the goals of religion.

The Qur'an enumerates in detail the wrongdoings and misdeeds of the People of the Book, especially the Israelites, in Sūrah al-Baqarah, Sūrah al-Nisā', Sūrah al-Mā'ida, and in its other chapters. However, wrongdoings and transgressions involving money have a special status, especially when discussing how the People of the Book cause corruption in righteous human societies

when they are given a free hand and able to do as they please, for there is no force of corruption greater than monetary transgressions.

This is because one of the most important foundations upon which the edifice of human society rests is that of the economy, which God has made a source of social stability. If we analyze the majority of crimes, transgressions, and injustices that people commit, they stem from one of two causes. The first is extreme poverty, which leads people to covet the wealth of others through theft, banditry, murder, cheating in the marketplace, usurping other's property, and so on. The second is extreme wealth, which leads a person to spend extravagantly on food, drink, clothing, accommodation, and marriage, to become consumed by their desires, overstep the bounds of decency, and to infringe on the life, property, and dignity of others.

Now, if we examine the different forms of corruption that step from these two extremes of wealth, we see that each of them has a negative impact on the system that manages the acquisition and ownership of property, and on the laws promulgated to distinguish between licit and illicit ways of consuming wealth. If this system of ownership breaks down, then people allow themselves to claim whatever property they can lay their hands on and accumulate wealth by any way possible, regardless of whether or not it is right for them to do so. Equally, they will look to satisfy their every selfish whim and desire without regard to its morality or lack thereof, no matter the consequences of this. This, in turn, generates a crisis of corruption in society and the spread of moral decadence. Society is transformed from a human environment to a base animal one that is governed solely by the stomach and whatever lies beneath it. In such a society, no one has any interest in politics or education, and no one gives any thought to wisdom or heeds any moral warnings.

Perhaps this is why God singles out embezzling people's wealth for mention here, especially when this is done by the scribes and monks who are supposed to be sources of moral education for their people and agents of reform in society.

Some have explained that the monks and scribes embezzled wealth by taking the money people donated to them because of their appearance of piety and asceticism, by charging usury, gaining wealth by illicit means, confiscating their opponents' property, or taking bribes as judges, and by selling indulgences or certificates that promised the bearer entry into heaven.

The apparent meaning of the verse is that it refers to their taking bribes as judges, as we have already discussed in our commentary on the verse: *O Messenger! Do not grieve for those who are active in unfaith* (5:41). And, even

if this were not the case and the verse was only referring to the practice of the Church in selling indulgences, this by itself would be sufficiently abhorrent to merit such condemnation.

As for the idea that this wealth was given to them in the form of donations because of their asceticism and piety, or in the form of pious endowments, wills, and bequests, this does not count as wrongfully eating up people's wealth. Equally, God has attributed usury and earning wealth illicitly to the People of the Book in general, and not only their clergy: *and for their taking usury—though they had been forbidden from it—and for eating up the wealth of the people wrongfully* (4:161), and *Eavesdroppers with the aim of telling lies, eaters of the unlawful* (5:42), whereas, in the present verse, God is concerned with the wrongdoing that is specific to the scribes and monks. Therefore, God's condemnation of their embezzlement of people's wealth is not a condemnation of something that includes the ordinary people.

It is the spiritual leaders of a community and their religious scholars who are supposed to teach them how to worship God and encourage them to reform their hearts and their deeds. When these individuals go astray and abandon the path of truth for that of falsehood, the truth is that whatever livelihood they earn or benefits they acquire after this are ill-gotten and illicit, and forbidden to them by both reason and religion.

Returning to the verse at hand, it also explains *nor practise the religion of truth* (9:29) by saying: *and bar from the way of Allah*. This is also based on the three attributes that God ascribed to them previously, the third of which is that they do not *practise the religion of truth*. This explains how their attributes and their deeds harm human society and impede the aims of the just religious government, namely to bring about moral reform in people and create a society that is alive and flourishing in a way that agrees with the human being's innate nature (*fiṭra*) and directs him towards his natural happiness (*saʿāda*).

This is why, out of all the various vices that He could mention, God singles out the fact that they do not *practise the religion of truth*, because it is the most destructive to human society: They use all of their powers and expend whatever resources they have, both apparent and hidden, to bar others from the way of God and prevent them from following it, and they have been doing this since the time of the Prophet down to the present day.

As for His saying, *and those who treasure up* (yaknizūn) *gold and silver, and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give tidings to them of a painful punishment*, al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says: '*Kanz* ("to treasure up") means to pile coins on top of one another and hoard them. It originally meant to store dates in

a container; the *kannāz* season is the time of year in which dates are stored. At the same time, a camel is called *kannāz* when it has been fattened up. As for the verse, *and those who treasure up gold and silver*, this means that they hoard them.'

Therefore, the use of the word *kanz* conveys the idea of hoarding wealth and preventing it from flowing freely between people in various kinds of dealings. Such a movement of wealth from one person to another would allow it to grow in a way that was beneficial not only to individuals but to society as a whole. Before the emergence of banks and treasuries, people would bury their hoarded treasure in the ground to keep it safe from those who would seek to deprive them of it.

Textually speaking, this verse is connected to the previous verses that criticise the People of the Book and rebuke their scribes and monks for devouring people's wealth falsely and barring others from the way of God. However, it contains no indication whatsoever in its wording that it was revealed about them alone or that its meaning was specific to them. Therefore, one cannot argue that this verse only applies to the People of the Book and that they are forbidden from hoarding wealth but that Muslims are free to pile up gold and silver and do with their property as they please without compunction.

On the contrary, this verse delivers a stern warning to those who hoard their wealth and threatens them with a severe punishment. However, the verse also clarifies what is condemnable about *those who treasure up gold and silver*, namely that they *do not spend it in the way of Allah*. Therefore, what God detests about hoarding is when it leads a person to not spend his wealth in His way when he is confronted with an opportunity to do so.

Based on what we read in the Qur'an, the way of God (*sabīl Allāh*) refers to whatever the religion of God depends upon for its security and stability. For example: waging *jihād*, protecting the essential interests of the religion, looking after the social affairs of Muslims without which society would collapse, and paying one's religious dues through which the religion strengthens the foundations of the religious community. Therefore, those who treasure up gold and silver while there are essential needs not being met have hoarded their wealth and not spent it in the way of God. Those people, God says, should be given tidings of a painful punishment, for they have given preference to themselves over their Lord and placed their own needs or those of potential future offspring before the very real and present needs of the religious community.

This can also be understood from the contents of the next verse, especially the line which reads: *This is what you treasured up for yourselves!* (9:35).

There, God rebukes them for keeping their wealth to themselves because they feared they might one day need it rather than spending it in God's way, which is the very lifeblood of human society in both this world and the Hereafter. And, in doing so, they have also betrayed God and His Messenger in another way: through concealing their wealth and keeping it hidden. Had they made known their wealth and allowed it to flow freely, perhaps the one in authority would have told them to spend it for a particularly pressing religious cause. However, because they hoarded their wealth and kept it hidden from others, the one in authority did not say anything about it, so the urgent need was not met as a result. In other words, there was hoarded wealth sitting idle when it was the one way to alleviate this need, while the one who hoarded it had no need of it at that time.

Therefore, the verse only condemns people for amassing wealth when this means that they prefer to keep it for themselves when they have no need of it instead of spending it in the way of God when there is an urgent need to do so. The reader should not imagine that Islam limits the right of ownership to a certain quantity of wealth. On the contrary, someone might have vast quantities of gold and silver but, instead of treasuring them up, makes use of them. Had the person who hoarded his wealth done this, he would have benefited from many times over, while also benefitting others through buying and selling, through employing others, through investing, or through some other means. In any case, someone who makes use of their wealth is not subject to this religious prohibition, because instead of trying to keep it hidden from others, he has used this wealth in a way that promotes economic growth and brings benefit to himself and others. He has not concealed it or prevented it from being used in the way of God. In fact, even if he doesn't spend it in the way of God, this condemnation still does not apply to him, because the ruler of the Muslims can always command him to spend in God's way as he seems necessary. Therefore, even if he does not spend in God's way, so long as he makes no attempt to conceal his wealth, he is neither a traitor nor a wrongdoer.

On the contrary, the verse in question only concerns hoarded wealth whose owner avoids paying his religious dues from it. This is not only in the sense of obligatory religious taxes, rather it includes both them and any urgent need that religious society has, such as waging *jihād*, saving lives, or the like thereof.

There are also recommended (*mustaḥabb*) ways of spending in the way of God, such as spending it on one's dependants or giving it to poor persons to use for something more than their basic needs. However, while these fall

within the category of 'spending in the way of God,' the same evidences that show they are recommended reveal that they are not what is meant by 'spending in the way of God' in the verse under discussion. Keeping one's wealth and not spending it on something recommended in the absence of something necessary to spend it is not the kind of 'treasuring up' that is forbidden by the verse, as can be seen from the verse itself.

Lengthy theological debates have also taken place amongst commentators regarding this verse, and we will address these after our discussion of the narrations relating to the current section of verses.

When God says, *give tidings to them of a painful punishment*, this is an explicit threat of punishment, which shows the severity of the prohibition.

يَوْمَ يُحْمَىٰ عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوَىٰ بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ ۖ
هَٰذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

(9:35) ***on the day when these shall be heated*** **(yuḥmā ʿalayhā)** ***in hellfire and therewith branded*** **(tukwā bihā)** ***on their foreheads, their sides and their backs: 'This is what you treasured up for yourselves! So taste what you have treasured!'***

The verb *iḥmā'* ('to heat') means to make something hot enough to cause a person discomfort, and when it is made transitive with the preposition *ʿalā* (lit. 'upon') it means to light a fire upon something until it becomes hot. *Kawā*—from which the verb *takwā* ('to brand or cauterise') is derived—means to press something hot against a body.

Therefore, the verse means: 'That painful punishment you are to give them tidings of is that those treasures will be heated in the fires of hell until they become burning hot. Then they will be pressed into the foreheads, sides, and backs of those who hoarded them. Then they will be told: "*This is what you treasured up for yourselves! So taste what you have treasured!*" for those treasures have become a source of punishment for them in the Hereafter.'

Note that God specifically mentions their forehead, sides, and backs. This might be symbolic: For example, they lowered and abased themselves for these treasures, and one prostrates with one's forehead; they sought shelter with them, and one seeks shelter with one's side; and they relied on them, and one leans on something with one's back.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Kāfī,* al-Kulaynī narrates via his chain from Ḥafṣ b. Ghayyāth from Imām al-Ṣādiq, in the Tradition of the Swords (*ḥadīth al-asyāf*) that he quotes from his father: 'As for the swords, they are three in number: The first sword is against the Arab idolaters. God says: *kill the polytheists wherever you find them* (9:15). The second sword is against the followers of the protected faiths (*ahl al-dhimma*). God revealed about them the verse: *and speak kindly to people* (2:83),[1] then He abrogated this with the verse: *Fight those who do not have faith in Allah nor in the Last Day, nor forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, nor practise the religion of truth, from among those who were given the Book, until they pay the tribute out of hand, being humbled* (9:29). So, those of them who lived within the realm of Islam (*dār al-Islām*) had a choice to either pay tribute (*jizya*) or be slain and their properties confiscated, and their families were enslaved. But, if they paid the tribute, then their lives, properties, and families were respected, and we could intermarry with them. However, those of them who lived in the realm of war (*dār al-ḥarb*) could be enslaved and their properties seized, but we could not marry them. They had the choice between entering the realm of Islam, paying the *jizya*, or being killed.'

(2) In the same source, it is narrated from Ṭalḥa b. Zayd from Imām al-Ṣādiq: 'It was the practice of the Prophet (*sunna*) not to take tribute from people with mental impairments (*al-maʿtūh*) or who lacked good sense (*al-maghlūb ʿalā ʿaqlihi*).'

(3) In the same source, it is narrated from Abū Yaḥyā al-Wāsiṭī, from some of his colleagues that Imām al-Ṣādiq was asked about the Magians (Zoroastrians): 'Do they have rights?' He said: 'Yes, have you not read in the letter of the Messenger of God to the people of

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1 The narrative of revelation and abrogation in this tradition does not match the contents of the first verse (2:83), which reads in full: *And when We took a pledge from the Children of Israel: 'Worship no one but Allah, do good to parents, relatives, orphans, and the needy, and speak kindly to people, and maintain the prayer, and give the zakat,' you turned away, except a few of you, and you were disregardful.* Therefore, the command to *speak kindly to people* was part of the pledge God took from the Israelites in the past, which God recounts in the Qur'an, rather than something addressed to the Muslims at the time of the Prophet. (Trans.)

Mecca: "Submit or else I shall declare war upon you!" They wrote back to the Messenger of God: "Take tribute from us instead and leave us to worship our idols." The Prophet wrote back to them: "I only take tribute from the People of the Book." So they wrote back to him, seeking to expose him as a liar, saying: "You claim that you only take tribute from the People of the Book, but you have accepted tribute from the Magians of Hajar."[1] The Prophet replied: "The Magians had a prophet who they killed and a scripture which they burned. Their prophet brought their scripture to them written on twelve thousand ox hides."'

Author's comments: There are many other traditions found in the collections with the same meaning as this one. The full discussion of matters relating to the *jizya* (tribute), *kharāj* (land tax), and other topics is for the books of jurisprudence.

(4) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī narrates from Ibn ʿAsākir, from Abū Umāma, from the Messenger of God: 'There are two kinds of fighting: Fighting against the idolaters until they believe or until they pay the tribute out of hand, being humbled, and fighting the aggressing faction until they return to the command of God, and when they do, you treat them justly.'

(5) In the same source, he narrates from Ibn Abī Shayba, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh, and al-Bayhaqī's *Sunan* from Mujāhid about the verse, *fight those who do not have faith in Allah* (9:29): 'This was revealed when Muḥammad and his Companions were ordered to launch an expedition to Tabūk.'

Author's comments: As we have already seen in the narrations concerning the event of Mubāhila, the Prophet imposed tribute upon the Christians of Najrān. Based on the contents of these narrations, this appears to have taken place in the year 6 A.H., two years before the expedition to Tabūk. His call to the rulers of Rome, Egypt, and Persia—all of whom were likewise People of the Book—also took place in that year.

(6) In the same source, al-Suyūṭī narrates from Ibn Abī Shayba from al-Zuhrī: 'The Messenger of God accepted the payment of tribute from the Magians who lived in Hajar, and the Jews and Christians of Yemen, taking one dinar for each adult male.'

(7) In the same source, he narrates from Mālik, al-Shāfiʿī, Abū ʿUbayd's

1 Today known as al-Aḥsā'. (Trans.)

Kitāb al-Amwāl, and Ibn Abī Shayba from Jaʿfar, from his father, that ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb asked people's advice concerning taking tribute from the Magians. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf told him: 'I heard the Messenger of God say: "Treat them in the same manner as you treat the People of the Book."'

(8) In the same source, it is narrated from ʿAbd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf* from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib that he was asked about taking tribute from the Magians, and he said: 'By God, there is no one on the earth today more knowledgeable about this than me. The Magians were a people with a scripture that they knew and knowledge that they studied. Then their leader drank wine and became intoxicated and lay with his sister and a group of believers saw that. When he awoke, his sister told him what he had done and said: "A group of people saw what you did who will not keep it quiet for you," so he summoned people whose loyalty could be bought and excused his actions by telling them: "You know that Adam married his sons to his daughters!" 'Then the believers who had seen him perform this act came and said: "Woe to you, we must punish you in accordance with God's law," so those people who were with him killed them. Then a woman came and said: "I saw it too!" He said: "Woe to you, whore of such-and-such a tribe!" She said: "Yes, I was indeed a whore, but I repented for it." Then he killed her too. After this he set about destroying the teachings found in their hearts and their books, until nothing remained of it.'

(9) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, about the verse, *The Jews say, 'Ezra is the son of Allah,'* (9:30), it is narrated from ʿAṭiya al-ʿAwfī, from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī that the Messenger of God said: 'God's wrath towards the Jews became severe when they said: "Ezra is the son of God," and God's wrath towards the Christians became severe when they said: "Christ is the son of God," and God's wrath will be severe towards those who shed my blood and hurt me through my family (*ʿitra*).'

(10) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is narrated from al-Bukhārī's *Taʾrīkh* from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī: 'During the Battle of Uḥud, the Messenger of God was struck in the face, and his tooth was broken. He got up and said: "Surely God's wrath towards the Jews became severe when they said that Ezra (ʿUzayr) is the son of God, and His wrath towards the Christians became severe when they said that Christ is the son of God, and surely God's wrath will be severe towards those who shed

my blood and harm me through my family."'

Author's comments: In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī narrates reports from Ibn ʿAbbās, Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, al-Sudayy and others about the story of Ezra that resemble *isrā'īliyyāt* (accretions from the Jewish and Christian traditions), and it appears that all of them actually came from Kaʿb.

(11) In *al-Iḥtijāj*, al-Ṭabrisī narrates that ʿAlī said: '*May Allah assail them* (qātalahum)*, where do they stray?* (9:30) means "may God curse them, where do they stray?" because the verb 'assail' (*qitāl*) is used to denote a curse. The same is true in the verse *Perish man (*qutila al-insān*)! How ungrateful is he!* (80:17).'

Author's comments: This has been narrated via Sunnī chains of transmission from Ibn ʿAbbās. In any case, this is an explanation of the meaning of the term as it is used in the verse rather than a linguistic definition of it.

(12) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via his chain of narrators from Abū Baṣīr that he asked Imām al-Ṣādiq about the verse, *they have taken their scribes and their monks as lords besides Allah* (9:31). He said: 'By God, they did not call people to worship them, for if they had, people would have refused to do so. Instead, they permitted them what was forbidden and forbade them what was permitted. In this way, they worshipped their scribes and monks without realizing it.'

Author's comments: al-Barqī narrates a tradition with the same meaning in *al-Maḥāsin*. Al-ʿAyyāshī also narrates it in his *Tafsīr* from Abū Baṣīr and from Jābir, who narrates it from Imām al-Ṣādiq and from Ḥudhayfa. Al-Suyūṭī narrates it in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* from several authorities, all of whom trace it back to Ḥudhayfa.

(13) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, we read that Abū Jārūd narrates from Imām al-Bāqir about the verse, *they have taken their scribes and their monks as lords besides Allah*: 'As for Christ, some of them exalted him in their own minds until they claimed that he was God and the Son of God. Some of them said: "The third of a trinity!" Another group said: "He is God!" And as for when God says, *their scribes and their monks*, this is because they obeyed them, listened to them unquestioningly, obeyed their commands, and believed in what they called them to. Therefore, they took them as lords by obeying them while abandoning God's commands, His scriptures, and His messengers, and tossing these behind their backs. All while following their scribes and monks. They obeyed them while disobeying God.'

(14) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is cited from *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* that al-Thaʿlabī

narrated from ʿUdayy b. Ḥātim: ʿI came to the Messenger of God wearing a golden cross around my neck. He told me: "O ʿUdayy, take off this noose!"'

(15) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is narrated from al-Ṣadūq, who narrates via his own chain of transmission from Abū Baṣīr that Imām al-Ṣādiq said about the verse, *it is He who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth* (9:33): 'By God, the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of this verse has not been sent down yet and it will not be sent down until the Qā'im comes forth. When the Qā'im comes forth there will not be a single disbeliever in God nor one who associates partners with the Imām save that he detests his coming. And if there was a disbeliever inside a boulder, the boulder would cry out: "O believer! There is a disbeliever in me, so break me open and kill him!"'

Author's comments: A tradition with a similar meaning has been narrated by al-ʿAyyāshī from Abū al-Miqdām from Imām al-Bāqir, and from Sumāʿa from Imām al-Ṣādiq; and also by al-Ṭabrisī from Imām al-Bāqir; and *Tafsīr al-Qummī* says that this verse was revealed about the Qā'im of the Prophet's Household. And this means that its interpretation concerns him, as indicated by the tradition narrated by al-Ṣadūq.

(16) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is narrated from Saʿīd b. Manṣūr, Ibn al-Mundhir, and al-Bayhaqī's *Sunan* from Jābir, about the verse, *that He may make it prevail over all religions*: 'This will not have come to pass until there is not a single Jew, nor Christian, nor follower of any religion other than Islam; and until the sheep and the wolves, the cows and the lions, and the humans and the snakes live side-by-side in safety from one another; and until no mouse burrows into storehouses; and until the tribute is no more, the crosses are broken, and pigs are killed; all of this will happen when Jesus son of Mary descends to earth again.'

Author's comments: The meaning of the tribute (*jizya*) being no more is that there is no longer any need for it because there is no longer anyone to take it from, as indicated by the beginning of the tradition. There are numerous traditions which confirm what this one says about there being no disbelief or idolatry when this comes to pass. However, there are other narrations as well that indicate that the Mahdī will impose tribute on the People of the Book after he reappears.

And this is perhaps confirmed by what God says about the People of the Book elsewhere in the Qur'an. For example: *We have cast enmity and hatred*

amongst them until the Day of Resurrection (5:64), *So We stirred up enmity and hatred among them until the Day of Resurrection* (5:14), and other such verses. These seem to suggest that the People of the Book will continue to exist until the Day of Resurrection, unless of course they merely use this expression to show that this lack of affection between them is permanent. We have discussed this in more detail in our commentary on the verses in question.

(17) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī narrates from Ibn al-Ḍurays from ʿIlbāʾ b. Aḥmar that when ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān wished to codify the Qur'an, they wanted to remove the '*and*' from the beginning of the phrase, *and those who treasure up gold and silver*[1] (9:34) but Ubayy b. Kaʿb said: 'You will leave the "*and*" in its place, or I shall surely place my sword upon your neck.' They left it in place.

(18) In his *Amālī*, Shaykh al-Ṭūsī narrates from a group, from Abū al-Mufaḍḍāl, from his chain of narrators, that when the verse was revealed, *And those who treasure up gold and silver, and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give tidings to them of a painful punishment*, the Messenger of God said: 'Anything you have paid *zakāt* upon is not treasured up, even if it is beneath the seven earths. And anything you have not paid *zakāt* upon is treasured up, even if it is upon the surface of the earth.'

Author's comments: A tradition with a similar meaning has been narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr* from Ibn ʿUdayy and al-Khaṭīb, who narrate from Jābir, from the Prophet, and it has been narrated by other routes as well, including from Ibn ʿAbbās and other Companions.

(19) In the same source, al-Ṭūsī narrates from Imām al-Ṣādiq, from his father Imām al-Bāqir, that he was asked about dinars and dirhams and what people owed of these. Imām al-Bāqir said: 'These are the seals of God, which He created for the benefit of His creatures, that they might organise their affairs and meet their needs with them. And whoever amasses a significant quantity of them and observes God's right to them—by paying the *zakāt*, that is—he has fulfilled God's command and been dutiful to Him. However, whoever amasses a significant quantity of such coins and is stingy with them, does not deliver God His due from them, and builds treasure houses to

1 This would mean it referred only to the scribes and monks who treasured up gold and silver. However, the presence of the 'and' means that this applies to everyone who hoards their wealth in this fashion. (Trans.)

store them, this person is one to whom God's threat of punishment applies. As He says in His Book: *on the day when these shall be heated in hellfire and therewith branded on their foreheads, their sides and their backs: 'This is what you treasured up for yourselves! So taste what you have treasured!'* (9:35).

Author's comments: This narration supports what we have already said regarding this verse.

(20) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, we read that, while he was in Syria, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī would get up in public and proclaim every day: 'Give tidings to those who treasure up wealth that they will be branded on their foreheads, branded on their sides, and branded on their backs, until the heat penetrates their insides!'

Author's comments: In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī uses this narration to explain why God— out of all of the limbs of the human body that He could have chosen to mention—specifically chose the forehead, the side, and the back. He says this is because the purpose of punishing them in this way is for the heat of the fires of hell to penetrate their insides, which means the inside of the head for the brand on their forehead and the inside of the chest and the stomach for the brands on their back and sides.

And it is possible to add to al-Ṭabrisī's explanation those verses and traditions that say they will be cast face-first and head-first into hell and then have their limbs scorched from above, with the end result that they will be branded on their foreheads, sides, and backs.

(21) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is narrated from ʿAbd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf* from Abū Dharr: 'Give tidings to those who treasure up wealth that they will be branded on their foreheads, on their sides, and on their backs!'

(22) In the same source, al-Suyūṭī narrates from Ibn Saʿd, Ibn Abī Shayba, al-Bukhārī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū Shaykh, and Ibn Mardawayh, who narrate from Zayd b. Wahb, who said: 'I came upon Abū Dharr in al-Rabadha and asked him: 'What brought you to this remote place?' He said: 'We were in Syria, and I recited the verse, *And those who treasure up gold and silver, and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give tidings to them of a painful punishment*. Muʿāwiya said: "This is not about us. It is about the People of the Book." I responded: "It is about us and them both."'

(23) In the same source, it is narrated from Muslim and Ibn Mardawayh from al-Aḥnaf b. Qays: 'Abū Dharr came and said: "Give tidings

to those who treasure up wealth that they will be branded on their backs, and it will burn through to their sides and branded on their foreheads, and it will burn through to the back of their heads!" I said: "What is that?" He said: "I did not tell them anything save what I heard their Prophet say."'

(24) In the same source, it is narrated from Aḥmad's *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, from Abū Bakr al-Munkadir, who said: 'When he was the governor of Syria, Ḥabīb b. Salama sent three hundred dirhams to Abū Dharr with the message: "Use this for your needs." Abū Dharr told the messenger: "Take them back to him, could he not find someone more favoured by God than us? We need only a shadow to sit beneath, three sheep to give us their milk, and a maid who blesses us with her service. I am afraid of having more than this!"'

(25) In the same source, al-Bukhārī and Muslim narrate from al-Aḥnaf b. Qays: 'I sat with an assembly of the Quraysh and there came a man rough of hair, clothes, and form who stood over us and greeted us. Then, he said: "Give tidings to those who treasure up their wealth of a stone made red-hot by the fires of hell that burns so intensely that when it is placed on their chest, it will burn through to their shoulder, and when it is placed on their shoulder, it burns through to their chest and causes them to shake with pain!"

'Then he turned away from the group and went and sat down to one side. I followed him and sat next to him without having any idea who he was. I said: "I do not think they appreciated you saying that." He said: "They don't understand anything, my friend told me..."—I said: "Who is your friend?" He answered: "The Prophet. Do you see this mountain of Uḥud?" I said: "Yes." He said: "I would love to have a pile of gold the size of this mountain so that I could give it all away save for three dinars. They do not understand that they are only gathering provisions for this world. By God, I will not ask them for anything of this world nor ask them questions about religion until I meet God Almighty."'

(26) In the *Ta'rīkh* of al-Ṭabarī, it is related from Shu'ayb, from Sayf, from Muḥammad b. 'Awf, from 'Ikrama, from Ibn 'Abbās: Abū Dharr went to 'Uthmān while Ka'b al-Aḥbār was with him and told 'Uthmān: 'You should not be content with people not harming one another until they also give charitably to one another, for it might befit the giver of *zakāt* not to restrict himself to *zakāt* alone but

also to give charitably to his neighbours, his brethren, and include his relatives also.'

Kaʿb replied: 'Whoever does what is obligatory has discharged his duty and need not do anything more.'

At this, Abū Dharr took his crook and struck him on the head, wounding him and exposing his skull.

'Uthmān pleaded with him to stop, and Abū Dharr did. He said: 'O Abū Dharr, fear God and control your hand and your tongue!' For when Abū Dharr struck him, he had said: 'O son of a Jewish woman , what are you talking about?'

Author's comments: The stories of Abū Dharr and his disagreements with 'Uthmān and Muʿāwiya are well known and recorded in the books of *Ta'rīkh*. Reflecting on the content of the above traditions and, in particular, what Abū Dharr said to Muʿāwiya, this suggests that this verse was not understood as only applying to the People of the Book. Furthermore, his altercation with 'Uthmān and Kaʿb suggests that our reading of the verse is correct, namely that its threat of punishment is directed to those who do not spend in obligatory cases in addition to *zakāt*.

Our reading is further supported by an analysis of how people lived at that time. Looking at history, we find that people then were divided into two broad groups: a majority who struggled to subsist from day-to-day and barely had enough to clothe themselves and meet their essential needs; and a minority who had become intoxicated with the world and amassing the wealth and property it contained. They amassed millions upon millions of dinars and dirhams in gifts from rulers, the spoils of war, and the taxation of land. It is enough for you to refer to the chronicles that recorded the fabulous wealth of some of the Companions; they owned large sums of money, slaves, estates, and mansions. In Syria, Muʿāwiya and the Umayyad Dynasty managed to create a court that was at least comparable in its luxury to those of the Roman and Persian emperors.

However, Islam does not approve of such extreme differences in wealth unless those with it spend on those without it to narrow the gap between the social classes, for the general situation must be remedied by the wealthy showing compassion to the poor and the strong to the weak.

Now, one might say: Abū Dharr merely expressed his own scholarly understanding (*ijtihād*) that any wealth in excess of what is needed to feed and clothe oneself is a treasure or hoard (*kanz*) that must be spent in the way of God. Or, one might say: He was calling people to practice asceticism in

regard to worldly things.

However, the reports of what he said flatly contradict this hypothesis. Abū Dharr does not say anything that would indicate this was his personal opinion or individual understanding as a scholar. On the contrary, he says: 'I did not tell them anything save what I heard their Prophet say,' or 'My friend said such-and-such.' Furthermore, there are narrations with sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) chains of transmitters that are found in both Sunnī and Shīʿī collections, in which the Prophet said: 'There is no one under the heavens or upon the earth more honest in speech than Abū Dharr.'

This refutes the statement of Shaddād b. Aws, which has been narrated from him by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and al-Ṭabarānī: 'Abū Dharr would hear a ruling from the Messenger of God and go out to his tribe of Bedouins. However, the Messenger of God would later explain the ruling in such a way that showed it to be less stringent than it had first seemed. Everyone else preserved the less-stringent version of the ruling given by the Messenger of God, but Abū Dharr did not hear it, because he was absent, so he acted on the more stringent version he had initially heard.'

However, Abū Dharr's claim that the verse about treasuring up wealth (9:34) is not restricted to the People of the Book but includes both them and the Muslims is not an example of what the above report ascribes to him, namely that he would take the more stringent ruling (*ʿazīma*) over the less stringent one (*rukhṣa*). Neither is his statement that merely paying the *zakāt* is not sufficient to remove the prohibition on hoarding wealth so long as a person is not spending on what is obligatory in the way of God. It is inconceivable that Abū Dharr did not hear the Messenger of God say that there are two kinds of charity, obligatory and recommended, or that he did not know that the evidences for supererogatory charity provide the best clarification for the scope of the verse on hoarding wealth.

Weaker than Shaddād's narration is what al-Ṭabarī relates in his *Taʾrīkh* from Shuʿayb, from Sayf, from ʿAṭiyya, from Yazīd al-Faqaʿsī: When Ibn al-Sawdāʾ came to Syria, he met Abū Dharr and said: 'Are you not amazed by Muʿāwiya saying: "All wealth belongs to God. Lo! Surely everything belongs to God!" It is as though he wants to keep it for himself to the exclusion of the Muslims and erase the name "Muslims" from the fiscal registers altogether!'

So Abū Dharr went to Muʿāwiya and said: 'How can you call the wealth of the Muslims "the wealth of God"?'

He answered: 'God have mercy on you, Abū Dharr! Are we not God's servants? Is not all wealth God's wealth? Is not all creation His? Is not all

command His?'

Abū Dharr said: 'Do not use this expression!'

Muʿāwiya said: 'I will not say that it does not belong to God, but henceforth I will call it "the wealth of the Muslims."'

Then Ibn al-Sawdā' went to Abū al-Dardā' and said: 'Who are you? By God, I think you are a Jew!' Then ʿUbāda b. al-Ṣāmit came and seized him, took him to Muʿāwiya, and said: 'This is the one who is always provoking Abū Dharr against you!'

Abū Dharr got up in Syria and began to speak: 'O men of wealth, show kindness to the poor. Give tidings *to those who treasure up gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah* of branding irons from a fire with which they will be *branded on their foreheads, their sides and their backs*!'

According to this account, Abū Dharr only took this stance and protested at the urging of Ibn al-Sawdā', and the two sources from whom al-Ṭabarī narrates this report and the bulk of his material about ʿUthmān—Shuʿayb and Sayf—are known liars and fabricators of traditions, as is clearly recorded by scholars of narrators' biographies (*rijāl*). They have likewise fabricated traditions from Ibn al-Sawdā', who is also known by the name ʿAbd Allāh b. Saba', and researchers have established that Ibn Saba' is a purely fictional personality without a historical basis.

(27) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is narrated by Ibn Mardawayh from Jābir that the Messenger of God said: 'There is no hoarder of wealth who does not pay what is due from it save that on the Day of Judgement he will be taken and branded on his forehead and his sides and told: "This is the treasure with which you were stingy!"'

(28) In the same source, it is narrated from al-Ṭabarānī's *al-Awsaṭ* and Abū Bakr al-Shāfiʿī's *Ghaylāniyyāt* from ʿAlī that the Messenger of God said: 'Surely God has imposed a duty on wealthy Muslims concerning their wealth, as much as suffices the poor, and the poor will never suffer from hunger or poverty except for the fact that the wealthy refrain from giving in charity. Lo! Surely God will hold the wealthy to account most severely or punishment them most painfully because of this!'

(29) In the same source, it is narrated by al-Ḥākim, who considers it sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*, and by al-Dhahabī, who considers it weak (*ḍaʿīf*), from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, from Bilāl, that the Messenger of God told him: 'O Bilāl, meet God as a beggar and do not meet him as a wealthy person!' Bilāl asked: 'How can I do that?' He said: 'If you are given sustenance

(*rizq*), do not conceal it, and if someone asks you for charity, do not refuse them.' Bilāl asked: 'How can I do that?' He said: 'It is just as I said, or else it is hellfire.'

A Discussion on the Meaning of 'Hoard' or 'Treasure' (*Kanz*)

There is no doubt that the communities that human beings form according to their innate nature exist for the purpose of exchanging goods and services with one another. Were this not the case, human communities would not last for the blink of an eye. A person benefits from being part of a community as follows: They work on the raw materials of the earth to the best of their ability in order to provide for their own needs and, in doing so, they produce a surplus. They then take this surplus and exchange it with other members of the community in order to acquire other things that they need but cannot produce for themselves. For example, a baker makes enough bread for himself and then exchanges the rest for a garment made by a tailor. This is how members of a community engage in trade and barter with one another in order to meet their needs.

Economic research has shown that members of primitive societies would exchange one thing for another without paying attention to anything else. However, not all things could be exchanged equally, because people had need of some goods more than others, and some goods are more abundant and readily available than others, while others were harder to obtain. So, the greater peoples' need was for something or the harder it was to obtain, the more demand there was for it, which rendered it more valuable relative to other goods. Conversely, the less people needed something or the more abundantly it was available, the less demand existed for it and, as a result, its value relative to other goods decreased. This is the economic basis of price.

Then, certain highly prized goods were adopted as a medium of exchange, in relation to which the values of all other goods, such as wheat, eggs, or salt, were determined and quantified. These goods then became the basis around which markets revolved, and this economic model can be seen at work in small communities today, for example in villages or amongst Bedouin tribes.

This state of affairs continued until people acquired precious metals such as gold, silver, copper and the like thereof, which they made the basis for measuring the value of all items. As such, they provided a standardised measure of value: Gold was the most valuable, followed by silver, followed by other metals. All of these metals were then minted into coins by various kingdoms and states, so that they became dinars, dirhams, fils, and so on. However, to

discuss the origins of money further would take us beyond the scope of our present discussion.

In any case, it was not long before gold and silver currency became the standard on which everything was based, the measure of value for all goods or services, the axis of all of life's needs, and the thing upon which wealth and prosperity depended. They became the essence of social life, such that any disruption in the flow of currency led to the disruption of society as a whole. They flowed through the markets and the markets flowed because of them.

I have already explained the role assigned to them by human societies with regards to regulating the value of goods and services and providing means to compare the value of different things. The paper currency that circulates today in the form of pounds and dollars, as well as cheques, represents the value of things without actually having any value in of itself. Therefore, they are a pure representation of value that is abstracted from any actual commodity.

As currencies, gold and silver perform an important societal function of regulating prices and providing an objective measure of value for different goods and services relative to one another. Reflecting on this, we see that they actually represent the ratio between one thing and another, and insofar as they represent the ratios between things—or, if you will, they are the very ratios themselves—then all of these ratios would be invalidated if the currency was invalidated, and any stagnation in currency would necessarily lead to a stagnation in goods and services.

In fact, between the two World Wars of the twentieth century, we saw the effects of some currencies losing their value entirely, such as the Ruble in Tsarist Russia or the Mark in Germany. Both of these countries were plunged into deep crises as a result of economic stagnation and inflation that resulted from the devaluing of their currencies. Economic calamities such as this can also be caused by people hoarding wealth and impeding the free flow of currency amongst the population.

This is something highlighted in the previously quoted tradition from Imām al-Bāqir, which is narrated by Shaykh al-Ṭūsī in his *Amālī*: 'He created (gold and silver) for the benefit of His creatures, that they might organise their affairs and meet their needs with them.'

Hence, it is clear that hoarding money is economically equivalent to devaluing commodities, as it hoarding money is rendered inert and unproductive. After all, if this money was not being sequestered away but was circulating through the economy instead, then it would be stimulating the market and facilitating transactions, with the beneficial effects of both of these being felt

throughout society. Rendering money inert is akin to closing down the market, which is akin to stopping the very lifeblood of society, as stagnation in the market leads to stagnation and decline in society.

Now, when I say, 'hoarding money,' I do not mean merely keeping it in treasuries or secure locations, for all human beings know instinctively that it is both good sense and a moral duty to protect one's wealth and valuables from loss or theft. Whenever money is invested in any sort of business venture and comes back to its owner, it is obligatory for them to protect this wealth from loss, theft, fraud, or embezzlement. Instead, by 'hoarding money,' what I mean is to keep it apart from the flow of market transactions and prevent it from circulating through the various areas of economic life in which it is used to meet the needs of society, such as feeding the hungry, quenching the thirsty, clothing the naked, generating profits, benefitting workers, growing capital, treating the sick, freeing captives, helping debtors, helping those in distress, preserving the security of a righteous society, and reforming those areas of it that have been corrupted.

These areas of spending—whether the spending itself is considered obligatory, recommended, or permissible—are too many to count, and a person should not go to either of the extremes of stinginess or wastefulness in any of them. However, while there is nothing sinful about not spending on recommended causes from the perspective of either reason or religion, seeking to dismiss the importance of recommended cases of spending as a category altogether is, in fact, the worst sort of crime or sin.

Consider your own daily life and the various areas of it on which you spend, whether on your home, your spouse, your food and drink, or your clothes, and think about what would happen if you spent your money only on what was absolutely 'necessary'—namely that which religiously obligatory—what kind of life would that be? If you avoided any kind of 'unnecessary' spending (in the broadest sense of the word), your life would be damaged beyond all repair.

Based on the above explanation, when God says, *and those who treasure up gold and silver, and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give tidings to them of a painful punishment* (9:34), it does not seem at all unlikely that He has in mind spending on the kind of recommended things we have already discussed, as 'treasuring up' wealth goes against not only obligatory but also recommended spending as a matter of principle.

This also clarifies the meaning of what Abū Dharr said to ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān when he went to see him according to al-Ṭabarī's narration, namely:

'You should not be content with people not harming one another until they also give charitably to one another, for it might befit the giver of *zakāt* not to restrict himself to *zakāt* alone but also to give charitably to his neighbors, his brethren, and include his relatives also.' He explicitly states that he does not consider it obligatory for a person to give away all of their excess wealth so long as *zakāt* had been paid; he also drew a clear distinction between obligatory and recommended cases of spending in the way of God. However, what he reportedly found objectionable was the idea that no charity was necessary beyond the obligatory, which effectively closes the door on all manner of good deeds, undermines the very aims of Islam's legislation on charity, and is harmful to the public interest.

In other words, he is saying: 'This is not a dictatorship like that of Rome or Persia, which has no duty to its people except to maintain security and stability by preventing people from harming one another and that people are then free to do as they please and even to go to any extremes they desire, to be moral or immoral, to follow guidance or go astray, and—like their own government—to not be held accountable by anyone!'

By contrast, the government of a religious society is not satisfied with people not harming one another. Instead, it directs people to what is best for them in all areas of life and works to promote happiness for all members of that society, whether they are rulers or ruled, leaders or led, served or serving, wealthy or poor, strong or weak. Such that the poor fulfil the needs of the rich through their labour and the rich fulfil the needs of the poor through their wealth; the position of the strong is preserved through the respect of the weak and the life of the weak is protected through the kindness and protection of the strong; the authority of the elite is maintained through the obedience of ordinary folk, while the obedience of ordinary folk is maintained through the justice and equanimity of the elite. However, none of this can be achieved except through the promotion of charity and good deeds in society; so that both obligatory and recommended duties will be performed according to what is appropriate for each. As for only giving what is obligatory and refusing to spend on recommended causes as a rule, this will devastate the very foundation of religious life in society, undermine the aims of the Lawgiver, and quickly give rise to dysfunction, disruption, and deeply rooted corruption in the social order to the point of inevitable collapse. All of this emanates from being lax in promoting the aims of the religion and being amicable with oppressors and tyrants.

This is why in al-Ṭabarī's account, Abū Dharr said to Muʿāwiya, 'How

can you call the wealth of the Muslims "the wealth of God"?'

To which Muʿāwiya replied, 'May God have mercy on you, Abū Dharr! Are we not God's servants? Is not all wealth God's wealth? Is not all creation His? Is not all command His?'

And Abū Dharr told him, 'Do not use this expression!'

This is because even if the expression that Muʿāwiya, his stooges, and the Umayyad caliphs who came after him used was true in its literal sense—and there are narrations from the Prophet and verses from the Qur'an that say as much—they had twisted its meaning to the opposite of what God had intended by it. The original meaning of everything being 'the wealth of God' was that it did not truly belong to anyone by virtue of their strength, authority, or power. Rather, it belonged to God and, therefore, they should spend it in His way for those causes He had specified. If it was something that a private individual had acquired through earnings, inheritance, or the like, then there was a rule for this. Equally, if it was something that the Islamic government had collected in the form of war spoils, tribute, land tax, charity, or the like thereof, then the religion has also specified the causes on which this can be spent. The holder of authority (*walī al-amr*) has no right to set aside any of that for himself or for a member of his family beyond what is necessary for their subsistence, let alone to hoard it, erect palaces, seclude themselves from their people, and live a life akin to that of a Roman or Persian emperor.

So the Umayyad dynasty used the slogan that 'all wealth is God's wealth' to ward off people's criticisms for misappropriating the wealth of the Muslims and spending it to satisfy their own selfish desires and in a manner that was contrary to God's wishes. When those who were entitled to this wealth objected that they were squandering the wealth of the Muslims, they retorted, 'All wealth is God's wealth, and we have been entrusted it by Him to use however we see fit.' In this way, they sought to justify their misappropriation of God's wealth and validate their misuse of it for their own personal benefit. In fact, their slogan means the opposite of what they claimed, because 'God's wealth' and 'the Muslims' wealth' mean the same thing, while Muʿāwiya and the Umayyads treated these as two separate categories and used one to invalidate the other.

If, when Muʿāwiya had said, 'All wealth is God's wealth,' he had done so with its true meaning in mind, there would have been no sense in Abū Dharr storming out of his meeting with him and calling out: 'Give tidings *to those who treasure up gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah* of branding irons from a fire with which they will be *branded on their foreheads,*

their sides and their backs!'

After all, Muʿāwiya had told Abū Dharr that he thought the verse on hoarding wealth only applied to the People of the Book. Perhaps this was also why they had plotted to erase the '*and*' from the beginning of the phrase, *and those who treasure up gold and silver* (9:34) when they were copying out 'Uthmān's codex, which is also why—per the aforementioned narration—Abū Dharr threatened to fight them.

Therefore, even though the account that al-Ṭabarī reports from Sayf and Shuʿayb appears to have been framed in a way to suggest that Abū Dharr was mistaken in his views—as al-Ṭabarī himself admits at the beginning of the account—there are elements in the story that ring true.

In short, then, the verse shows that it is forbidden to hoard gold and silver when there are urgent causes in the way of God on which it must be spent, or to refuse to give it to those who are entitled to *zakāt*, or to refuse to spend it on defending the community. Equally, it shows that it is forbidden to bar the way of voluntary good deeds and performing recommended acts of charity amongst the people.

Furthermore, it makes no difference to the ruling whether the wealth in question is visible and flowing through the marketplaces or whether it is treasure buried beneath the earth. The term *kanz* ('treasure or hoard') applies to any excess wealth and the act of hoarding it and keeping it hidden is a crime against the rightful authority, as we have already discussed above.

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Verses 36–37

These two verses explain the sanctity of the Sacred Months of Dhū al-Qaʿda, Dhū al-Ḥijja, Muḥarram, and Rajab, confirming their inviolability and abrogating the practice of *nasīʾ* ('postponement') from the pre-Islamic era. The verses also command the Muslims to fight the idolaters altogether.

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ ۚ فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا
فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۚ وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً ۚ
وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

(9:36) ***Indeed the number of months with Allah is twelve months in Allah's Book, the day when He created the heavens and the earth. Of these, four are sacred. That is the upright religion. So do not wrong yourselves during them. Fight all the polytheists, just as they fight you all, and know that Allah is with the Godwary.***

The term month (*shahr*), like year (*sana*) and week (*usbūʿ*), is a unit of time known to all people since the dawn of human history. And some of these units of time led people to identify others of them. For example, people could directly observe the continuous passage of years with the passage of the seasons—spring, summer, autumn, and winter, and then summer once again—and then people saw that these units of time could be subdivided into units of shorter duration based on the changing faces of the moon, from once crescent to another, which took approximately thirty days, which divided the year into approximately twelve months.

Now, based on the movements of the sun, a year consists of three hundred and sixty-five days, plus part of a day. Therefore, one solar year does not equate exactly to twelve lunar months, which consists of approximately three hundred and fifty-four days, and the only way to resolve this is through 'leap' counting. However, the lunar calendar is something directly observable by all people, whether they are settled or nomadic, young or old, educated or unlettered.

Then, the month can be divided into weeks. Even though a month cannot

be divided exactly into weeks, this is another case where direct perception trumps exact measurement, and this is what has maintained the position of the week as a unit of time over the centuries, even as the calculation of the duration of a year has become more precise through astronomical observations, as has the counting of the months. Today, the lunar months have largely been replaced by solar months that correspond completely to the duration of the solar year.

This is with regard to equatorial regions and the temperate regions that extend from them to approximately sixty-seven degrees north and south, which covers most of the inhabited regions of the earth's surface. In the areas beyond this band, which are approaching the Earth's northern and southern polar regions, the system of years, months, and weeks breaks down, as the entirety of the year at each of the poles consists of one long night and one long day. Connections between the peoples who inhabit these extremes—who are very few in number—and peoples who inhabit the temperate band, however, have led the former to adopt the same calendrical system of days, weeks, months, and years as observed by the latter. Therefore, the system of measuring time we use is in relation to the majority of the people who live in the world's temperate regions.

Therefore, our system of time only applies to the planet we currently inhabit. As for other planets, their year—which is the measure of the time it takes for them to make one complete orbit of the Sun—differs from our own. Equally, their lunar months differ depending on whether they have one or more moons, as has been discussed by astronomers.

Therefore, when God says, *Indeed the number of months with Allah is twelve months*, this is referring to the lunar months which make up lunar years, and these months are grounded in direct observations of the different phases of the moon by the Earth's inhabitants.

The evidence that this verse is referring to lunar months is as follows:

First, that God then says: Of these, four are sacred, as it is well-established that Islam has only declared four months sacred—and these are Dhū al-Qaʿda, Dhū al-Ḥijja, Muḥarram, and Rajab—and these are lunar months, not solar ones.

Second, when the Qur'an uses the expressions, with God (*ʿind Allāh*) and months in God's Book (*fī kitāb Allāh*), this shows that there is no way to change or alter this number of months because they are like this 'with God' and God's knowledge does not change, and they were like this in God's Book on the day when He created the heavens and the earth. Therefore, God gave

the Sun a fixed course to follow, and He ordained phases for the moon to pass through until it becomes like an old palm leaf. *Neither does it behove the sun to overtake the moon, nor may the night outrun the day, and each swims in an orbit* (36:39). This is the decree written in the Book of Creation, and there is no reversing God's divine decree.

Moreover, it is clear that solar months exist purely as a matter of convention, even if this is not the case for the four seasons and the solar year. The twelve months of the year which are grounded in observable realities are the lunar months.

Therefore, the verse means that the months that make up each year are twelve in number; this is the number of months as it exists in the knowledge of God and the number inscribed in the book of creation on the day that God brought forth the heavens and the earth and set the firmament in motion, including the movements of the Sun and the Moon through the heavens. This is the objective basis for there being twelve months.

This makes clear the erroneousness of the claim, put forward by some commentators, that the term *Allah's Book* in the verse refers to the Qur'an or a physical book made of pages upon which the number of the months is written in actual words with ink.

Of these, four are sacred (ḥurum). That is the upright religion (*al-dīn al-qayyim*). So do not wrong yourselves during them.

The word *ḥurum* ('sacred') is the plural of *ḥarām*, which means 'forbidden or inviolable.'

Qayyim means something which contributes to people's wellbeing and assists them in managing the affairs of their lives.

Of these, four are sacred—according to definitive narrations, this refers to the four sacred months of Dhū al-Qaʿda, Dhū al-Ḥijja, Muḥarram, and Rajab. This statement also has legislative force, as indicated by the following sentence: That is the upright religion.

God only made these four months sacred so that people would cease fighting and enjoy peace and security during this time, and so that they might seek comfort and happiness and turn to their Lord with worship and veneration therein.

The sanctity of these four months originates in the religion of Abraham, and the Arabs continued to respect this sanctity even in the days of pre-Islamic Ignorance when they would worship idols. However, they might sometimes delay the sanctity of one month to another month for one or more years as part of the practice they called *nasīʾ* (postponement), which is condemned

in the following verse.

When He says that is the Upright Religion, this refers to the sanctity of the four sacred months. *Dīn* (religion) can refer to the totality of the teachings that God sent down to His prophets, but it can also refer to a part of them. Therefore, this means that four of the lunar months have been rendered sacred as part of the religion that looks after the wellbeing of God's servants. This is also something God highlights in the verse, *Allah has made the Ka'ba, the Sacred House, a sustentation for mankind, and also the sacred months* (5:97), and we have discussed this further in our commentary on it.

So do not wrong yourselves during them (*fīhinna*)—meaning during the four sacred months. If the verse was referring to the previously mentioned twelve (months), it would have been more appropriate to use the (singular feminine) pronoun *hā* instead of the (plural feminine) pronoun *hinna*, as noted by the grammarian al-Farrā'. Also, if it was referring to the twelve months, this is equivalent to a whole year, in which case it would mean 'do not ever wrong yourselves,' in which case this part of the verse should follow logically from *indeed the number of months with Allah is twelve months.* However, there is no apparent relation between the two. Therefore, the most appropriate reading of the verse is: 'These four months are sacred and, because they are sacred in the eyes of God, you should desist from wronging yourselves during them out of respect for their sanctity and momentousness to God.'

The prohibition against wronging oneself during these months illustrates the magnitude of their sanctity, first of all, because this prohibition is delivered based on their sanctity and, secondly, because it is a specific prohibition that follows a general one. It is the same as saying: 'Do no wrong, especially at such-and-such a time!'

Therefore, the wording of the sentence, so do not wrong yourselves during them, is general and, as such, conveys a prohibition on every kind of sin and wrongdoing. However, the context in which it occurs indicates that its primary concern is to deliver a prohibition against fighting during the sacred months.

Fight all (*kāffatan*) the polytheists, just as they fight you all (*kāffatan*), and know that God is with the Godwary—Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says in his Mufradāt:

> *Kaff* literally refers to the palm of a person's hand, which is what they use to seize and release things. The verb *kafaftuhu* can mean 'I seized his hand' or it can mean 'I struck him with my hand and warded him off with it.' Hence, in whatever sense it is used, *kaff* conveys a meaning of repelling or pushing back, even if someone does not use his

> palm to do this. A person who has lost his sight is sometimes referred to as a *rajul makfūf* (lit. 'a man seized (by blindness)').

God says in the Qur'an: *We did not send you except as one who wards off mankind* (kāffatan lil-nās) (34:28), meaning as someone who will prevent them from sinning, and the appearance of the *hā'* at the end of *kāfa* is to emphasise its meaning, in the same way as in the words *rāwiyya* ('abundant narrator'), *'allāma* ('extremely learned'), *nassāba* ('genealogical expert').[1]

God also says: *Fight all the polytheists, just as they fight you all* (9:36). Now, some have said this means: 'fight them to repel them just as they fight you to repel you'; while others have said it means 'fight them in a group as they fight you in a group.' This is because a group is sometimes referred to as a kāffa (lit. 'a palm') because of its collective strength, just as it is sometimes referred to as a wāzi'a (lit. 'a restraint') for the same reason. It is based on this meaning that God says: O you who have faith! Enter into submission, all together (2:208).

Al-Ṭabrisī says in Majma' al-Bayān:

> *Kāffa* means 'to encompass.' It is derived from the term *kuffa*, which refers to a thing's edge or border—the point beyond which it is prevented from extending. The original meaning of *kaff* is 'to restrain or prevent.'

God uses the term *kāffa* in the sense of 'all' and 'together' twice in this verse as an adverb (*ḥāl*) in relation to two subjects: the Muslims and the idolaters. Now, in the original Arabic construction of the verse, it is possible for each of these adverbs to refer to either of these two subjects, which present four possibilities for the verse's meaning:

'Fight the polytheists (you) all as they all fight you.' (Muslims, idolaters)
'Fight the polytheists (you) all as they fight all of you.' (Muslims, Muslims)
'Fight all the polytheists just as they all fight you.' (idolaters, idolaters)
'Fight all the polytheists just as they fight all of you.' (idolaters, Muslims)

Of these, the meaning that springs most readily to mind when studying the verse is the fourth one. This is because it treats the two adverbial instances of the *kāffa* as referring to the subjects they appear next to in the sentence (so

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1 Referring to the *tā' marbūta* that is pronounced as a soft *hā'* if one stops on it or as a *tā'* if it is connected to the following word. The appearance of this letter at the end of the word typically marks it as grammatically feminine. Hence, the question Rāghib addresses here is: how can this word refer to the Prophet while being grammatically feminine? His answer is that this *tā' marbūṭa* intensifies the meaning of the word, as is the case with the other examples he presents. Therefore, *kāffa* means 'someone who repels forcefully.' (Trans.)

the *kāffa* next to 'polytheists' or *mushrikīn* refers to the polytheists, and the *kāffa* next to the pronoun 'you' or *kum* refers to the Muslims being addressed by the verse). Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'Fight all of the polytheists just as they fight all of you.'

Therefore, this verse enjoins the faithful to fight the totality of the idolaters, which renders its meaning akin to the verse, *kill the polytheists wherever you find them* (9:5). Whatever abrogates that verse also abrogates this one, and whatever specifies or otherwise restricts the meaning of that verse does the same to this one.

However, the verse only deals with the case of fighting the polytheists or idol worshippers, rather than the People of the Book. This is because, even if the Qur'an attributes polytheism (*shirk*)—directly or indirectly—to the People of the Book, it only refers to idol worshippers as 'polytheists' or *mushrikīn*. On the other hand, it attributes disbelief (*kufr*) to the People of the Book both in trait and in deed, and it is applied to them in the same way as it is applied to the idol worshippers without distinction.

Hence, the phrase fight all the polytheists should not be read as abrogating the verse that enjoins the Muslims to take tribute (*jizya*) from the People of the Book (see 9:29), nor does it specify it or restrict its meaning in any way. There have been some other interpretations have been offered for this verse, but we have omitted them because there is little benefit to be had in discussing them here.

...and know that Allah is with the Godwary: This is a lesson and a reminder to the Muslims and, at the same time, an encouragement to acquire the trait of Godwariness in order to acquire the benefits associated with it. These are: Firstly, the promise of divine assistance and victory, for surely the party of God will be triumphant.

And, secondly, that it prevents them from overstepping God's bounds in battles and military expeditions by killing women, children, or those who give greetings of peace to them. Khālid b. Walīd killed a woman at the Battle of Ḥunayn, so the Prophet sent a message to him telling him to desist from such actions. Then he killed some men of the Banū Judhayma tribe who had converted to Islam, so the Prophet paid compensation to their heirs and disavowed Khālid's actions to God. Meanwhile, Usāma killed a Jewish man who had identified himself a Muslim, so God revealed the verse: *do not say to someone who offers you peace, 'You are not a believer,' seeking the transitory wares of the life of this world. Yet with Allah are plenteous gains* (4:94).

إِنَّمَا النَّسِيءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الْكُفْرِ ۖ يُضَلُّ بِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُحِلُّونَهُ عَامًا وَيُحَرِّمُونَهُ عَامًا لِيُوَاطِئُوا عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ فَيُحِلُّوا مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ ۚ زُيِّنَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ أَعْمَالِهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

(9:37) ***Indeed postponement* (nasīʾ) *is an increase in unfaith, whereby the faithless are led astray. They declare it permissible in one year and forbid it another year, so as to fit in with the number which Allah has made inviolable, thus permitting what Allah has forbidden. Their evil deeds have been made to appear to them as decorous, and Allah does not guide the faithless lot.***

The verb *nasaʾ* means to delay or put off something, and the noun *nasīʾ* refers to a sacred month whose prohibition on fighting has been delayed, which was something that the Arabs did during the pre-Islamic era. Perhaps they would delay the sanctity of some of the sacred months to other months.

As for precisely how this practice operated, commentators and historians alike have presented a variety of opinions. Based on what is said in the verse, it appears that there was a practice observed by the pre-Islamic Arabs with regard to the sacred months that was called nasīʾ. The term *nasīʾ* suggests that they postponed the prohibitions associated with a sacred month until a later ordinary month. So, they would postpone the sanctity of the month, but they would not cancel it altogether, because they wanted to preserve the traditions that had been handed down to them from Abraham via their ancestors.

This meant they would not ignore the prohibitions associated with a sacred month, but simply delay them to a different month for a year or more so as to observe the full number of months that God had sanctified, which were four in number, before returning the rules pertaining to the sanctity of the months to their original place in the calendar.

In this way, they continued to distort the divine laws even after they had disbelieved in God by associating idols with Him as partners. That is why God describes it as an increase in unfaith (*ziyāda fī al-kufr*).

God has already mentioned the specific ordinance concerning the sanctity of the sacred months in the previous verse, namely the prohibition: *So do not wrong yourselves during them* (9:36). The most obvious example of wrongdoing included in this prohibition is fighting. In fact this is the sole example that we know the Prophet was asked about, as God relates in the verse: *They ask you concerning warfare in the holy month. Say, 'It is an outrageous thing to*

fight in it...' (2:218). This is in a similar vein to the verses, *Do not violate Allah's sacraments, neither the sacred month...* (5:2), *and Allah has made the Ka'ba, the Sacred House, a sustentation for mankind, and also the sacred month, the offering and the garlands...* (5:97).

Equally, the sanctity of the Ka'ba or of the Holy Mosque is manifest in the fact that God designated it a place of security, as He says: *...and whoever enters it shall be secure...* (3:97), and: *Did We not establish a secure sanctuary for them* (28:57).

Therefore, it appears that the *nasī'* or 'postponement' mentioned in the verse only refers to delaying the sanctity of a sacred month to allow for fighting to take place in it rather than to delay the Hajj pilgrimage, which is a ritual act of worship associated with one of the sacred months.

This corroborates those accounts which describe the Arabs as sanctifying particular months of the year in accordance with the ancient traditions of Abraham and Ishmael that they continued to observe. The pre-Islamic Arabs were a people for whom raiding and warring with one another were a way of life, so perhaps it was difficult for them to observe three consecutive months in which there could be no fighting. To get around this, they would delay the prohibition on fighting in the month of Muḥarram to that of Ṣafar, meaning they would prohibit fighting in Ṣafar to allow it in Muḥarram. They would observe this postponement for a time, then they would restore the prohibition on fighting to Muḥarram once more. And they would not delay the prohibition of fighting in Muḥarram until the month of Ṣafar before the month of Dhū al-Ḥijja had set in.

As for those accounts which say that the Arabs would postpone the Hajj pilgrimage from Dhū al-Ḥijja to another month, these find no support in the wording of the verse whatsoever, and we will discuss these in detail in our treatment of the relevant narrations, below.

When the Qur'an says, Indeed *nasī'* is an increase in unfaith, this means that delaying the sanctity that God had ordained particularly for these sacred months and moving it to another ordinary month is an increase in faithlessness. This is because it is interfering with the ordinance that God has legislated, and disbelieving in God's signs after having already disbelieved in God by associating partners with him is an increase in unfaith.

...whereby the faithless are led astray: Meaning that others lead them astray through this practice. This implies that there is some authority who decides when the *nasī'* takes place. Traditions say that this was one of the Banū Kināna tribe, and we will discuss this in full when we come to the narrations.

They declare it permissible in one year and forbid it another year, so as to fit in with the number which God has made inviolable, thus permitting what God has forbidden. This is an explanation how *nasī'* works, and the context of the verse indicates that the pronoun 'it' refers to the sacred month, meaning that they permit fighting in a sacred month whose sanctity they have delayed in one year, then observe its sanctity in the correct month the following year. Or, to put it another way, they permit fighting in the month by delaying the prohibition to another month, and they forbid fighting in it the next year by returning the prohibition to its original place in the calendar.

The verse further says that they only follow this approach of delaying it one year and keeping it the next so that they maintain the sanctity of the same number of months in a year that God has declared inviolable. In other words, they wish to preserve the sanctity of the four sacred months by observing the ban on fighting for the same number of months in the year, while altering the months in which the prohibition on fighting occurs to allow for their wars and raids without violating this tradition.

Their evil deeds have been made to appear to them as decorous, and Allah does not guide the faithless lot: The one who made these deeds appear decorous to them is Satan, as we have discussed in our commentary on other verses of the Qur'an where this phrase appears. Although this act could also be attributed to God, as is the case with other verses too, an evil act is never attributed to God unless this refers to the recompense for the act, as per the verse: *Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many; and He leads no one astray thereby except the transgressors* (2:26).

This means that when one of God's servants commits a sin and God prevents guidance from reaching him, this provides an opening for the one who tempts mankind into error, namely Satan, to make their deeds seem decorous and pleasant to them. In doing so, he corrupts them and misguides them. That is why God says: *Their evil deeds have been made to appear to them as decorous*, and immediately follows this with: *And Allah does not guide the faithless lot.* It is as if when it was said: Their evil deeds have been made to appear to them as decorous, someone asked: 'How can God allow that to happen?' To which the response came: 'Those are disbelievers in God, and God does not guide the faithless lot.'

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Abū Khālid al-Wāsiṭī, who narrates from Imām al-Bāqir, who narrates from his father, ʿAlī b.

al-Ḥusayn, from the Commander of the Faithful that when the Messenger of God's illness became severe, he said: 'O people! The year consists of twelve months, of which four are sacred.' Then he counted them on his hand: 'Rajab by itself, then Dhū al-Qaʿda, Dhū al-Ḥijja, and Muḥarram in succession.'

Author's comments: There are a number of traditions which interpret the twelve months of the year in terms of the twelve Imams: the four sacred months as ʿAlī the Commander of the Faithful, ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā, and ʿAlī b. Muḥammad, and the year as the Messenger of God. However, how these traditions relate to the verse (9:36) is not entirely clear given its context.

(2) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is narrated via Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī's *Shuʿub al-Īmān* from Abū Bakr, that the Prophet delivered a sermon during his Hajj pilgrimage, in which he said: 'Know that time has passed and returned to the form it had on the day when He created the heavens and the earth. The year is twelve months, of which four are sacred, the three successive months of Dhū al-Qaʿda, Dhū al-Ḥijja, and Muḥarram, and Rajab on its own between Jumādā and Shaʿbān.'

Author's comments: This is one of the well-known sermons of the Prophet, which has been narrated through a variety of routes, including from Abū Hurayra, Ibn ʿUmar, and Ibn ʿAbbās, and from Abū Ḥamza al-Riqāshī, from his uncle, who had been alive at the time of the Prophet, as well as others.

When the Prophet says that 'time has passed and returned to the form it had on the day when He created the heavens and the earth,' this shows that the laws of Islam are founded on the divinely instituted natural order and that this is what renders it capable of governing human affairs. This includes the issue of the four sacred months and the abolition of *nasī'*, which is an increase in unfaith.

(3) In the same source, it is narrated via Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Abū al-Shaykh from Ibn ʿUmar: 'The Messenger of God stopped in ʿAqaba and said: "Surely *nasī'* is from Satan and an increase in unfaith by which the disbelievers are led astray; they allow fighting in a month one year and prohibit it the next, they declare Muḥarram sacred one year only to declare Ṣafar sacred the next and permit fighting in Muḥarram. This is *nasī'*."'

(4) In the same source, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and

Ibn Mardawayh narrate from Ibn ʿAbbās: ʿJunāda b. ʿAwf al-Kinānī would attend the (Hajj) season each year. He was also known as Abū Thumāda. There, he would call out: "Pay attention! Surely Abū Thumāda neither fears nor is blamed! Pay attention! The Muḥarram is permitted (for fighting)..."

ʿWhen some of the Arab tribes wished to raid their enemies during the sacred months, they would come to Junāda and say: "Permit for us to fight in this month in exchange for abstaining from fighting in Ṣafar." And the Arabs would not fight during the sacred months, so he would permit it to them for one year and forbid it to them the following year, and he would forbid it in the next year in order for it to correspond to the number of months God had declared inviolable, so that they would keep four months sacred, even though they would make the month of Ṣafar permissible for fighting in one year and forbidden another.'

(5) In the same source, it is narrated via Ibn al-Mundhir from Qatāda, about the verse, Indeed *nasīʾ* is an increase in unfaith (9:37): 'Some misguided people added Ṣafar to the sacred months; their spokesperson would get up during the Hajj season and say: "Your gods have made Ṣafar sacred!" So they would treat it as though fighting were forbidden in it for that year, and they used to refer to Muḥarram and Ṣafar as "the two Ṣafars." The first to practice *nasīʾ* with regard to the sacred months were the Mālik clan of the Kināna tribe. There were three of them: Abū Thumāma Ṣafwān b. Umayya, one of the Banū Faqīm b. al-Ḥarith, and one of the Banū Kināna.'

(6) In the same source, it is narrated from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, from al-Sudayy, about the same verse: 'A man of the Banū Kināna called Junāda b. ʿAwf and known as Abū Thumāma was the one who postponed the sacred months. It was hard for the Arabs to keep off fighting for three months as this meant they could not raid one another. So, whenever they wanted to raid someone, Abū Thumāma would stand up at Minā and deliver a speech, in which he would say: "I have declared Muḥarram permissible for fighting and forbidden fighting during Ṣafar in its place." Then, people would fight one another in Muḥarram and when Ṣafar commenced, they would retire and lay down their weapons once again. Then Abū Thumāma would get up the following year and say: "I have declared fighting in Ṣafar permissible and forbidden it in Muḥarram." In this way, they were

able to observe four sacred months, while still being allowed to fight in Muḥarram.'

(7) In the same source, it is narrated from Ibn Mardawayh, from Ibn ʿAbbās, about the verse, *They declare it permissible in one year and forbid it another year* (9:37): 'This refers to the month of Ṣafar. The Hawāzin and Ghaṭafān would permit fighting in it one year and forbid it the next.'

Author's comments: The kernel of these narrations, as you can see, is that the Arabs observed the sanctity of the four sacred months of Rajab, Dhū al-Qaʿda, Dhū al-Ḥijja, and Muḥarram. However, they sometimes found it difficult to hold off from warring and raiding for three consecutive months, so they asked someone from the Banū Kināna to declare the third of the three months permissible for fighting. This person would stand up amongst them in Minā during the Hajj season and declare Muḥarram permissible for fighting and postpone its inviolability until Ṣafar. Then they would go and fight their enemies during Muḥarram of that year, then respect the sanctity of it the following year. This is the practice known as *nasīʾ*.

They also used to call Muḥarram 'the first Ṣafar' and Ṣafar 'the second Ṣafar' in the same way as the spoke of two Jumādās and two Rabīʿs. The practice of *nasīʾ* or 'postponement,' therefore, seems to have been restricted to Muḥarram and Ṣafar. In fact, it is because God specifically forbade fighting in Muḥarram and revoked the practice of *nasīʾ* that the first Ṣafar came to be known as Muḥarram, a name which means 'forbidden,' as it was originally known as Shahr Allāh al-muḥarram ('the month that God has forbidden fighting in'). Meanwhile, the name Ṣafar came only to apply to the second of the two Ṣafars. This means that the name Muḥarram is one of the terms that Islam introduced to the Arabic language, as al-Suyūṭī mentions in his Muzhir.

(8) In the same source, ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Abū al-Shaykh narrate from Mujāhid about the verse, Indeed *nasīʾ* is an increase in unfaith: 'God ordained that the Hajj should be performed in Dhū al-Ḥijja. The idolaters used to call the months Dhū al-Ḥijja, Muḥarram, Ṣafar, Rabīʿ, Rabīʿ, Jumādā, Jumādā, Rajab, Shaʿbān, Ramaḍān, Shawwāl, and Dhū al-Qaʿda, which would be followed by Dhū al-Ḥijja, in which they would perform the Hajj. Then they remained silent about Muḥarram and did not say anything about it. Instead, they would call it Ṣafar and Ṣafar, then they would call Rajab Jumādā al-Ākhar, then they would call Shaʿbān Ramaḍān and Ramaḍān Shawwāl, then call Shawwāl Dhū al-Qaʿda, and Dhū

> al-Qaʿda Dhū al-Ḥijja, then they would call Muḥarram Dhū al-Ḥijja, and they would perform the pilgrimage in this month, which they called Dhū al-Ḥijja.
>
> 'They continued this way, performing the Hajj in a different month each year, until the pilgrimage of Abū Bakr fell in the month of Dhū al-Qaʿda. However, the Prophet performed his pilgrimage in the month of Dhū al-Ḥijja, whereat he got up and addressed the crowds, saying: "Know that time has passed and returned to its original form on the day when He created the heavens and the earth."'

Author's comments: In spite of its evident confusion of details, the key point of this account is that the pre-Islamic Arabs would perform the Hajj pilgrimage annually in the month of Dhū al-Ḥijja, but they actually wanted to perform the pilgrimage in a different month each year. To that end, they would move it from one month to another, and each year that month would be known as Dhū al-Ḥijja and the month's original name would be omitted.

In practice, this meant that each year would consist of thirteen months, even if this meant that some months were repeated in the calendar twice or more times, as the narration seems to indicate. This is why al-Ṭabarī reports that the pre-Islamic Arabs used to say that the year consisted of thirteen months, or—in an alternative report—twelve months and twenty-five days.

Another corollary of this is that all of the names of different months would shift year by year, and that the same month would not be called by the same name twice except once every twelve years, assuming that this system was consistently applied. However, this would not be called a delay or postponement, as adopting a thirteen-month year and calling the last month of the year Dhū al-Ḥijja actually involves changing the very basis of one's calendrical system rather than merely delaying one of its months.

Moreover, given that this account contradicts all of the reports and accounts that have come down on this topic, and there is nothing to corroborate this account save this report and others like it, such as the narration of ʿAmr b. Shuʿayb from his father, from his grandfather: 'The Arabs would add a month or two to each year, and they would not perform Hajj at the proper time except once every sixteen years. This is the *nasī*' that God mentions in His Book. So, when it was the year of the Greater Pilgrimage—and the Messenger of God performed the pilgrimage from the following year—and people were bringing offerings, God's Messenger got up and delivered a sermon, in which he said: "Know that time has passed and returned to the form it had on the day when He created the heavens and the earth."' However, this narration is

just as confused as the one above from Mujāhid.

The accounts which state that Abū Bakr performed the Hajj in Dhū al-Qaʿda have been transmitted by Sunnī sources, as has the report that the Prophet made him the leader of the Hajj that year, 9 A.H., and there are other reports still that say the Hajj was performed in Dhū al-Qaʿda of that year.

Now, this pilgrimage, however it has been described in the sources, would have been performed by the command and consent of the Prophet, and he would not have commanded anything save that this was by the command of his Lord. Now, how is it possible that God could have commanded people to perform the Hajj in the month of *nasī'* only to turn around and call *nasī'* an 'increase in unfaith'?

Therefore, the reality is that the practice of *nasī'* was as we have previously described, namely that the Arabs found it difficult to keep off fighting for three consecutive sacred months, so they would postpone the sanctity of Muḥarram until Ṣafar one year, then observe it at the normal time the following year.

As for the idea that the pre-Islamic Arabs would perform the Hajj pilgrimage in a different month each year, or a different month every two years, or in one month one year and then in another month for two years, this is not clearly established by any reliable sources. Moreover, it is likely that the pre-Islamic Arab tribes differed amongst themselves in this regard because they belonged to different tribes and clans, each of which had its own customs that it followed. However, the Hajj was also a seasonal pilgrimage, and these tribes would have had to perform it at the same time as one another in order to benefit from the security provided by the sacred months. They could not have done so if one group considered a particular month permitted for fighting, while others considered it forbidden, as is obvious.

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Verses 38–48

These verses discuss the hypocrites (*munāfiqīn*), describing some of their traits and distinguishing features, their plots and machinations against Islam and the Muslims, the suffering their hypocrisy has caused, and their aversion to striving in the way of God. These verses also talk about the Prophet's departure from Mecca during the Emigration (*hijra*) and the story of the Cave (*ghār*).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَا لَكُمْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمُ انْفِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ اثَّاقَلْتُمْ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ ۚ أَرَضِيتُمْ بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ ۚ فَمَا مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ﴿٣٨﴾

(9:38) ***O you who have faith! What is the matter with you that when you are told: 'Go forth in the way of Allah,' you sink heavily to the ground? Are you pleased with the life of this world instead of the Hereafter? But the wares of the life of this world compared with the Hereafter are but insignificant.***

According to the rules of morphology, *ithtthāqaltum* ('to sink heavily') was originally *tathāqaltum*, following the same pattern as the verb *iddārakū* (which was originally *tadārakū*) and others like it. It appears that the word *ithtthāqaltum* is imbued with the meaning of inclining towards something and has been made transitive using the preposition *ilā* ('to'). Therefore, when someone says *ithtthāqaltum ilā al-ʿarḍ* ('you sink heavily to the ground'), it means: 'you incline towards the ground as if weighed down by a burden.' The meaning of *go forth in the way of Allah* is to go forth in order to struggle against Islam's enemies.

Are you pleased with the life of this world instead of the Hereafter?: The word *riḍā* ('to be pleased') means 'to be satisfied with something.' Here it has been made transitive using the preposition *min* ('from,' translated as *instead of*). For example one might say *raḍītu min al-māl bi ṭayyibihi* ('I am satisfied with good wealth') or *raḍītu min al-qawm bi khillati fulān* ('I am satisfied with all of these people because of my friendship with so-and-so'). Therefore, the construction of the phrase *a raḍītum bil-ḥayāt al-dunyā min al-ākhira* (lit. 'Are you satisfied with the life of this world of the Hereafter?')

implies that the life of this world is akin to a poor imitation or the meanest portion of the life of the Hereafter. This is also the meaning given by the latter most part of the same verse, *But the wares of the life of this world compared with the Hereafter are but insignificant.*

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'O you who believe, why is it that when the Prophet...'—notice that the verse itself does not mention his name in order to magnify his status—'...tells you to go forth to struggle against the enemies of Islam, you hesitate as if you do not wish to go forth. Is it because you are happy with the life of this world and satisfied with it instead of the life of the Hereafter? Surely the wares of this world are nothing in comparison to those of the next!'

This verse and the ones that follow it strongly reprimand the believers and caution them harshly. It is possible that they are referring to the campaign to Tabūk, which is one of the occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) narrated about this verse.

إِلَّا تَنْفِرُوا يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا وَيَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّوهُ شَيْئًا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

(9:39) ***If you do not go forth, He will punish you with a painful punishment, and replace you with another people, and you will not hurt Him in the least, and Allah has power over all things.***

The punishment that this verse warns them of is not specified, so there is no basis for restricting it to the punishment of the Hereafter. On the contrary, it is left ambiguous. In fact, the context of the verse suggests that it is referring to either the punishment of this world or the punishment of this world and the next together.

...and replace you with another people: Meaning that He will bring a different people to you, who do not sink heavily to the ground when carrying out God's commands or going forth in the way of God when they are ordered to. The evidence for this meaning is the context of the verse itself.

...and you will not hurt Him in the least: This highlights their insignificance in the eyes of God should He wish to take them away and bring others in their place, for God does not benefit from them in the least. On the contrary, by obeying God's commands, they benefit themselves and the only harm they do by disobeying Him is to themselves. When He says, *and Allah has power over all things*, this explains the reason for the previous part of the

verse, *if you do not go forth, He will punish you with a painful punishment, and replace you with another people*.

إِلَّا تَنْصُرُوهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا
فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا ۖ فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ
عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِجُنُودٍ لَمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا السُّفْلَىٰ ۗ وَكَلِمَةُ
اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

(9:40) ***If you do not help him, then Allah has already helped him when the faithless expelled him, as the second of two* (thānī al-ithnayn)*, when the two of them were in the cave* (ghār) *he said to his companion, 'Do not grieve; Allah is indeed with us.' Then Allah sent down His composure upon him, and strengthened him with hosts you did not see, and He made the word of the faithless the lowest; and the word of Allah is the highest; and Allah is all-mighty, all-wise.***

Thānī al-ithnayn means 'one of the two.'

Ghār refers to a wide opening in a mountain. The cave in this verse is the cave of Jabal Thawr near Minā, rather than the Cave of Ḥirā', in which, according to abundant reports, the Prophet used to withdraw on his spiritual retreats.

...he said to his companion, 'Do not grieve; Allah is indeed with us': According to definitive reports, the '*companion*' in this case is Abū Bakr. The meaning of this is, 'do not be grieved or fearful because of the loneliness and estrangement from your homeland you are experiencing, the absence of any helper, the ascendancy of your enemies, and their pursuit of me (the Prophet), for surely God is with us and He will help us against them.'

Then Allah sent down His composure upon him, and strengthened him with hosts you did not see: In other words, God sent down His composure upon His Messenger and supported His Messenger with hosts you could not see. These hosts diverted their pursuers from them in various ways, so that they could not enter the cave and seize the Prophet therein, and there are numerous reports about this that we will examine in our discussion of the narrations, below.

The evidence that the pronoun '*him*' in *Allah sent down His composure upon him* refers to the Prophet rather than Abū Bakr is that the pronouns before and after this also refer to him. For example, *if you do not help him*,

Allah has already helped him, *the faithless expelled him*, *he said to his companion*, *and strengthened him*. Therefore, there is no basis for claiming that the pronoun '*him*' in *upon him* alone—out of all of the other pronouns—refers to Abū Bakr, unless there is definitive evidence to that effect.

Secondly, this verse occurs in the context of expounding the assistance that God has already given to his Prophet at a time when there was no one else there to help him. This is what is implied by the statement, *if you do not help him, then Allah has already helped him when*. Sending down composure (*sakīna*) and strengthening him with the assistance of unseen hosts are one of the special blessings bestowed by God upon the Prophet.

This is shown by the repetition of the preposition *idh* ('when') three times in the verse. On each occasion, it introduces some kind of explanation for what immediately came before it. For example, when God says, *when the faithless expelled him*, this explains *Allah has already helped him*; whereas *when the two of them were in the cave* explains the condition of *the second of the two*; while *when he said to his companion* specifies the time at which the events signified by *when the two of them were in the cave* were taking place.

Third, the entirety of the verse leads towards a single conclusion, namely: *and He made the word of the faithless the lowest; and the word of Allah is the highest*, which concerns God's assistance to His Messenger. There is no doubt that this sentence is intended to explain everything that came before it. The meaning of *the word of the faithless* is the decision they made in Dār al-Nadwa to kill the Prophet and extinguish the light of God. On the other hand, *the word of Allah* refers to God's promise to assist His Messenger and complete His light. Therefore, how could anyone argue that the sentence, *Allah sent down His composure upon him* refers to God's assistance to someone else when it occurs in the middle of a verse whose entire focus is God's assistance to the Prophet?

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'If you do not come to his aid, O you who believe, then God has demonstrated His assistance before, at a time when there was no one to assist him or protect him and his enemies—the idolaters—were assailing him from every angle and pursuing him with the intention of killing him. Therefore, he was forced to abandon Mecca with only one other person to accompany him. That is when they found themselves in the cave, when the Prophet said to his companion Abū Bakr, 'Do not be frightened by how things seem now, for surely God is with us and He holds the power to assist us in His hand!' Then God came to his aid by sending down His composure upon him and supporting him with hosts that your

sights cannot perceive. But He brought low the word of those who disbelieve—their word being their idea to kill him and their resolution to see this carried out—and rendered their schemes ineffective. At the same time, the word of God, which is His promise to help His Prophet, make His religion triumphant, and complete His light, the highest of the high. This is because God is almighty and unsubdued and wise such that there is nothing He does not know, and He makes no mistakes in what He wills and does.'

From the above, it is evident that the sentence, *then Allah sent down His composure upon him*, follows from *then Allah has already helped him*. At the same time, it also follows from *he said to his companion, 'Do not grieve...'*, for the adverbial preposition '*when*' refers to the time *when* God came to his aid, as we have already seen. Hence, the entirety of the verse aims to make known the special assistance that God has granted to His prophet and no one else. Therefore, each time *then* is used, this means that the phrase it introduces follows on from the phrase introduced by the adverbial *when*. Therefore, the phrase, *then Allah sent down His composure*, follows from *then Allah has already helped him* rather than *he said to his companion, 'Do not grieve...'*. Hence, it cannot refer to Abū Bakr rather than the Prophet.

Now, one might argue that the Prophet was always in a state of composure from his Lord. Therefore, the fact that God sent down composure in this specific context indicates that it must have been sent down upon his companion.

However, this can be refuted as follows:

First, the Qur'an says concerning the Battle of Ḥunayn, *then Allah sent down His composure upon His Messenger and upon the faithful* (9:40). Some have argued that this shows that the Prophet himself was seized by fear during the course of the battle, whereat God sent down composure upon him, which is the opposite situation to the one described in the cave (whereby Abū Bakr received God's composure). However, this reading is pure speculation without any evidence, as the verse itself does not mention the Prophet as being grieved, fearful, or the like; it only mentions the retreat of the faithful. It likewise invalidates the argument that the Prophet was always in a state of composure that never needed to be renewed, as, if this were the case, then how could he become fearful at Ḥunayn so that God needed to send down composure upon him? This is unless, of course, they mean that he was in a state of constant composure while he was in the cave.

Akin to this is the verse that says God sent down composure upon him and upon the believers in Sūrah al-Fatḥ: *When the faithless nourished bigotry in their hearts, the bigotry of pagan ignorance, Allah sent down His composure*

upon His Messenger and upon the faithful (48:26).

Second, the fact that *and strengthened him with hosts you did not see* follows from *then Allah sent down His composure upon him*, because both of them occur in the same context. Therefore, if the composure was sent down upon Abū Bakr rather than the Prophet, then either Abū Bakr was the one strengthened *with hosts you did not see* or we must separate the two statements from one another even though they occur in the same context, which we would have no basis for doing.

Some commentators have argued—perhaps to avoid separating the two statements from one another—that the pronoun 'him' in *and strengthened him with hosts you did not see* also refers to Abū Bakr, in which case it was Abū Bakr rather than the Prophet who received both composure from God and support from unseen hosts.

Some have argued that the battles in which the Qur'an describes unseen hosts descending, such as the Battle of Ḥunayn, the Battle of al-Aḥzāb, or the Battle of Badr, it does not explicitly say that they were descending upon the faithful nor that they supported the faithful. However, it is evident that they only came down in order to deliver divine assistance (*naṣr*), which automatically includes assistance and support for the faithful, so there is no reason to preclude the *hosts you did not see* being sent down to help Abū Bakr, and whether they helped the believers in general or Abū Bakr in particular, in both cases this is ultimately done in support of the Prophet.

According to this interpretation, it makes more sense to read the phrase, *and He made the word of the faithless the lowest*, as following logically from *then Allah sent down His composure upon him, and strengthened him with hosts you did not see*, otherwise we would again face the problem of separating two statements that were uttered in the same context without any apparent justification to do so.

However, as should be evident to the reader, this interpretation of the verse—which makes Abū Bakr the recipient of composure and the assistance of unseen hosts instead of the Prophet—deprives it of a unified meaning and, instead, makes it confused and self-contradictory, such that its beginning and end are at odds with one another. It begins by saying that the Prophet is too dear and noble in the eyes of God to be reduced to asking help from the likes of those who are lazy in responding to His commands. On the contrary, God is his guardian and the one who will come to his aid, even if none of those around him will do so. Then, according to the reading presented above, instead of explaining the assistance that God has already given to His Prophet, the verse

turns to discussing the assistance He gave to someone else by sending down composure upon him and supporting him with unseen hosts.

There is no denying that when God assists some of the faithful or all of them, this assistance is, in reality, sent for the sake of the Prophet. However, the context of the section of verses under discussion precludes such a reading, in as much as it begins by addressing the believers as a whole, saying, *O you who have faith!* (9:38). Then, it criticizes them and admonishes them for being lax in their response to the Prophet's command to go forth in the way of God and to fight the enemies of Islam. Then, the second verse threatens them with divine punishment and being replaced by another people if they refuse to go forth, and it explains that neither do God and His Messenger have any need of them, nor does their refusal harm God and His Messenger in the least. Meanwhile, the third verse illustrates why the Prophet has no need of them, because his Lord is his protector and supporter, and He came to his aid even when no one else could; *when the faithless expelled him, as the second of two, when the two of them were in the cave, he said to his companion, 'Do not grieve; Allah is indeed with us.'*

Therefore, it is obvious that the purpose of this verse is to demonstrate the direct assistance God renders specifically and personally to His Prophet without any of the faithful contributing anything to this. The goal of the verse is not to illustrate God's assistance to the Prophet via the faithful, whether in whole or in part, as God has grouped them together to censure and reprimand them rather than to show how He helped some of the faithful in order to help the Prophet.

Equally, when God says, *him when the faithless expelled him, as the second of two*, He is making a general reference to the help He lent to His Prophet, which He then goes on to explain in detail. It makes no sense, in this context, that He should begin by making a general reference to the help that He provided to His Prophet, only to mention the special assistance He delivered to his companion in the form of sending down composure and supporting him with unseen hosts. Therefore, the latter part of the verse can only be read as an explanation of the former.

The third reason reading *then Allah sent down His composure upon him, and strengthened him with hosts you did not see* as a reference to Abū Bakr is untenable is as follows: It ignores the true meaning of composure, which we have already discussed in our commentary on the verse: *Then Allah sent down His composure upon His Messenger and upon the faithful* (9:26).

The second issue: According to the context of the verse, the phrase, *and*

strengthened him with hosts you did not see, means that God granted him assistance at that time. On the other hand, those who claim that it means that He strengthened him with these unseen hosts at the Battle of the Trench or the Battle of Ḥunayn have no evidence to support this assertion whatsoever.

The third issue: The '*word*' (kalima) in *and He made the word of the faithless the lowest* refers to the decision of the disbelievers in Dār al-Nadwa to kill the Prophet and put an end to his divine mission. At the same time, the '*word*' in *and the word of Allah is the highest* refers to the promise God gave to His Prophet to help him and make his religion triumph over all others.

When the verse says, *then Allah has already helped him when the faithless expelled him, as the second of two...*, this is a reference to what is recounted in Sūrah al-Anfāl: *When the faithless plotted against you to take you captive, or to kill or expel you. They plotted and Allah devised, and Allah is the best of devisers* (8:30). When God says that He dispelled the word of the faithless and realized His word at the end of the present verse, this relates to the beginning of the verse, which recounts the Prophet being expelled or being compelled to leave. What forced the Prophet to leave Mecca was the plot to kill him, which had been agreed upon by the Meccan leadership. Therefore, this is the word that God thwarted and brought low, and it is contrasted with the word of God, which is nothing other than divine assistance and victory.

The above demonstrates the error of those who claim that *the word of the faithless* refers to disbelief and idolatry and *the word of Allah* refers to monotheism and faith. This is because, even though idolatry is a 'word' of theirs and monotheism is a 'word' of God's, this does not mean that whenever the Qur'an mentions either the word of the faithless or the word of God that this is a reference to these two concepts, especially when there are indications that another meaning is intended.

انْفِرُوا خِفَافًا وَثِقَالًا وَجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

(9:41) *Go forth, whether lightly* (khifāfan) *or heavily* (thiqālan), *and wage jihād with your possessions and persons in the way of Allah. That is better for you, should you know.*

Khifāf ('lightly') and *thiqāl* ('heavily') are the plurals of *khafīf* ('light') and *thaqīl* ('heavy') respectively.

Based on the context, '*heavily*' here suggests the presence of impediments

and obstacles to a person going forth to wage war. For example, because of business dealings, love of one's family and friends and aversion to being separated from them, and the absence of the necessary provisions, means of transportation, weapons, and the like thereof. Conversely, '*lightly*' suggests the opposite.

The fact that *lightly* and *heavily* are two diametrically opposed states of being means that the command to *go forth, whether lightly or heavily* signifies: 'Go forth in whatever condition and there can be no valid excuse for refusing to do so.' This is akin to the command to strive with possessions (*amwāl*) and persons (*anfus*), which means to strive in the way of God with any means that you have at your disposal.

Based on this, it is clear that the command contained in this verse is unqualified and absolute, which means it can still be qualified by valid excuses that relieve a person of the obligation to wage *jihād*, such as illness, blindness, lameness, and the like thereof. The meaning of *whether lightly or heavily* does not refer to such excuses.

لَوْ كَانَ عَرَضًا قَرِيبًا وَسَفَرًا قَاصِدًا لَاتَّبَعُوكَ وَلَٰكِنْ بَعُدَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الشُّقَّةُ ۚ وَسَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَوِ اسْتَطَعْنَا لَخَرَجْنَا مَعَكُمْ يُهْلِكُونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

(9:42) ***Were it an accessible gain*** **(araḍan qarīban)** ***or a short journey*** **(safaran qāṣidan)***, they would have surely followed you; but the distance* **(shuqqa)** *seemed too far to them. Yet they will swear by Allah: 'If we could, we would have surely gone forth with you.' They destroy themselves. Allah knows that they are indeed liars.*

The word *'araḍ* denotes something that is quick to vanish, and it is often used to denote worldly wealth, which is the sense in which it is used in the present verse, as indicated by the context in which it occurs. *Qarīb* (lit. 'near') here means 'near at hand.'

Qāsid means someone who adopts a middle course, used as an adjective for *safar* ('journey') in the verse, it means a journey that is not overly long and easy for the traveller to undertake.

Shuqqa (lit. 'hardship') refers to distance here insofar as distance is a cause of hardship for the traveller.

As the context of the verse suggests, this verse reprimands and rebukes the

hypocrites who hang back from going forth with the Prophet on his campaign to Tabūk. This is because the campaign in which the Prophet personally participated, in which the hypocrites hung back, and which was at a far distance was that of Tabūk and none of his other campaigns.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'If you had commanded them and summoned them to pursue a gain that was near at hand, spoils within easy reach, or an easy journey, they would have surely followed you, Muḥammad and gone forth willingly in the pursuit of worldly gains. However, the distance seemed great for them and they thought it a difficult undertaking, so they clung to the ground and were lax in responding.

Now, when you return to them and blame them for hanging back, they will swear oaths to you in the name of God: 'If we could have gone forth with you, we surely would have.' However, they ruin themselves, because they only go forth to fight in the hope of some easily won worldly gains, then they hang back when things are difficult for them and offer false excuses to their Prophet and swear false oaths by God.' Alternatively, *they destroy themselves* might mean that they ruin themselves through the swearing of false oaths, and *Allah knows that they are indeed liars.*

عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْكَ لِمَ أَذِنْتَ لَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَتَعْلَمَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

(9:43) *May Allah excuse you! Why did you grant them leave before those who told the truth were evident to you and you had ascertained the liars?*

The first sentence, *may Allah excuse you*, is an invocation for God to excuse the Prophet, in the same vein as those invocations that say, *Perish man! How ungrateful is he!* (80:17); *Perish he, how he decided!* (74:19); *May Allah assail them, where do they stray?* (9:30).

This invocation is attached to the following sentence, *Why did you grant them leave...*, meaning 'leave to remain behind and avoid fighting.' This question is intended as an admonishment or criticism, which conveys the meaning: 'It was better not to permit them to stay behind and avoid fighting.' The rationale for not granting them this leave is explained in the same sentence, *...before those who told the truth were evident to you and you had ascertained the liars?* However, the purpose of this is not to rebuke the Prophet, but to illustrate how thinly concealed their hypocrisy and deceitfulness is, to the

extent that the slightest trial, such as not granting them leave to sit back from fighting, would make it plain to see.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'May God excuse you, why did you allow them to stay back and avoid fighting? If you had wished, you would not have permitted them to do so—and they deserved no better—and then it would have become clear to you which of them was truthful and which of them were liars, for you would have been able to easily see their deceit and hypocrisy.'

As you can see and as we have already pointed out, this verse aims to highlight their deceit and their hypocrisy and that they will be exposed by the slightest test or trial that they face. In this context, it is appropriate to direct some reprimand or criticism towards the person being addressed, as if it is they who concealed their wicked deeds and evil character. As a rhetorical device, this is a form of indirect speech which conveys the obviousness of the matter at hand, as when you are directing your words to one person in order for another person to hear them.

Therefore, the aim of this verse is not to point out any shortcoming on the part of the Prophet in carrying out God's commands or suggest that he had committed a sin, but rather to call attention to the deceitfulness of the hypocrites who stayed back from fighting. When the verse suggests that it was better not to have granted them permission to remain behind, this means that not granting them permission would have been more useful in exposing their shamefulness and that they deserved no better than this because of their evil character and ill intent. It does not mean that this, in and of itself, was the better course of action or that it was more beneficial for the interests of the religion.

The evidence for this reading of the verse can be found three verses down, where God says, *had they gone forth with you, they would have only added to your troubles, and they would have surely spread rumors in your midst, seeking to cause sedition among you. They have some spies among you* (9:47). This shows that it was more useful to let them stay behind to protect the army from their trouble making, ill-formed opinions, and dissension. Allowing them to sit back from the fighting meant that they could cause problems for the faithful by stirring up disagreements in their ranks, especially given that some of those with the army who were weak in their faith or harboured sicknesses in their hearts acted as spies for them and would hasten to support them. Therefore, if the Prophet had not allowed them to stay behind, they would have stoked divisions and promoted disunity, and the problems they

would have caused thereby would have been more serious than the problems they caused by staying behind.

This is further confirmed by the verse, *Had they desired to go forth, they would have surely made some preparations for it; but Allah was averse to arouse them, so He held them back, and it was said, 'Be seated with those who sit back'* (9:46). Their hypocrisy and aversion to fighting was obvious because of their lack of preparations for battle and their obvious happiness at being allowed to stay behind. All of this would have been quite apparent to a person of the Prophet's perceptiveness and intelligence, quite aside from the fact that God had already informed him of their schemes countless times before this chapter was revealed. With this in mind, how could God genuinely reprimand the Prophet here for granting them permission before examining their condition such that their hypocrisy would become clear and it would have been possible to distinguish the hypocrites from the true believers? Therefore, the meaning of this criticism is what we have already explained.

This illustrates the error of those who claim that the verse indicates the Prophet had committed a sin. They argue that God cannot excuse (*'afuww*) someone unless they had sinned, and that, by granting the hypocrites permission to remain behind, the Prophet had committed a lesser sin. After all, you would not say to someone, 'why did you do that?' if they had not done something wrong.

This is nothing more than playing with God's words, for if they were in the same situation and someone said that to them, they would not accept this interpretation of its meaning. We have already explained how the reprimand at the beginning of the verse is not meant to be taken in earnest.

As for their claim that you would not say to someone, 'why did you do that?' unless they had done something wrong, this is also incorrect. When someone gives priority to something of lesser importance over something of greater importance, it is perfectly acceptable to say: 'Why didn't you do that which was most important first?' However, the point is ultimately moot, because, as we have already discussed, the reprimand at the beginning of the verse is not intended to be taken literally.

This is akin to what some others have said about commentators such as al-Zamakhsharī, who they claim have been disrespectful by suggesting that this verse means that God would seriously need to forgive His Prophet. Instead, they should have known that when his Lord and Teacher invokes His forgiveness upon him, this is forgiveness offered before any sin has been committed, which is a form of divine grace and a mark of favour.

Others, such as al-Rāzī, go to a different extreme. They try to argue that the word 'excuse' (*ʿafuww*) does not imply the commission of any sin and that God was merely rebuking His Prophet for not choosing the best course of action.

In this regard, they have become overly fixated on the definition of the word *dhanb* as a sin or an act of disobedience to God, which is actually a terminological convention that developed subsequent to the time of the Prophet. The basic meaning of *dhanb* in this sense is any action that causes some harm or a loss of benefit. Of course, *dhanb* originally and literally denotes the tail of an animal (*dhanb al-dāba*). It is in no way synonymous with 'sin' (*maʿṣiya*); in fact, it is broader in meaning than this. Therefore, the permission that the Prophet granted to the hypocrites to stay behind is only a *dhanb* in the sense that it meant that the benefit identified in the verse (exposing the hypocrites) did not materialise as a result. Elsewhere, God says, *Indeed We have inaugurated for you a clear victory, that Allah may forgive you what is past of your sin and what is to come* (48:1–2).

Then al-Rāzī goes into a lengthy discussion in which he argues that this was a decision that the Prophet made on the basis of his own independent reasoning (*ijtihād*), as there was no revelation on this matter from God. He goes on to say that this was something the prophets could and did practice, but that they were not immune to error when they did, as infallibility (*ʿiṣma*) only applied when they were conveying divine revelation, whether in words or deeds. Therefore, it is impossible that the Messenger ever lied or erred in what he was conveying from his Lord or demonstrating in action.

According to al-Rāzī, a further example of this can be found when God reprimands the Prophet in Sūrah al-Anfāl, following his ransoming of captives after the Battle of Badr. Here, God says, *A prophet may not take captives until he has thoroughly decimated (the enemy) in the land. You desire the transitory gains of this world, while Allah desires (for you) (the reward of) the Hereafter, and Allah is all-mighty, all-wise* (8:67). Al-Rāzī claims that this action would have occasioned a painful punishment from God were it not for a decree that God had already issued. This is the end of our summary of al-Rāzī's view.

It is not clear how it aids our reading of the verse to say that the Prophet failed to adopt the most appropriate course of action (*tark al-awlā*), or that this is not called a sin (*dhanb*) in religious parlance, which defines a sin as something deserving of divine punishment, and that it is a *dhanb* in the original sense of the word, namely something occasioning harm or a loss of benefit.

The reader will have already noted that, according to our explanation of the verse, the Prophet's actions were neither *dhanb* in the sense of 'sin' or in

the sense of 'something causing harm or loss of benefit.' This is because the subsequent verses clearly explain that allowing the hypocrites to remain behind was the best course of action for the Muslim army as it protected them from the hypocrites' treachery and divisiveness. What is more, had the Prophet not permitted them to stay back from fighting, their treachery, divisiveness, and faithlessness would have almost certainly come to the fore. These were already known to the Prophet, as indicated by the verse, *had they desired to go forth, they would have surely made some preparations for it* (9:46). The verse points to their lack of preparations for warfare as evidence that they did not desire to go forth, meaning that this was something that would have been visible to a person of the Prophet's stature and intelligence.

This is in addition to the fact that he could recognise the hypocrites by their tone of speaking, as God says elsewhere, *yet you will recognise them by their tone of speech* (47:30). How could their hypocrisy have been hidden from anyone who heard them say, *'Give me leave, and do not put me to temptation'* (9:49), or describe the Prophet, *'He is an ear'* (9:61), or speak ill of him concerning the distribution of alms instead of coming to him and advising him directly—all of these are outward signs of hypocrisy, behind which lies nothing except disbelief and dissent.

Based on the above, the Prophet was already well aware of their hypocrisy and divisiveness, and he knew the contents of their souls. So, why would God rebuke him for granting them leave to remain behind *before those who told the truth were evident to you and you had ascertained the liars*? This would not make sense, which shows that the rebuke itself is not intended to be heard as a rebuke, but to drive home another point, as we have already discussed.

Let us now address the claim that 'the permission that the Prophet granted to the hypocrites to stay behind is only a *dhanb* in the sense that it meant that the benefit identified in the verse did not materialise as a result.' One benefit identified by the verse is to make known to the Prophet those who were faithful to him and those who were liars. However, this is not intended in the sense that he did not know one from the other, as what we have discussed above shows that he was well informed about them. However, the real benefit identified by the subsequent verse is to forestall any efforts to spread dissension in the army's ranks by allowing the hypocrites to remain behind. The Prophet was well aware of their disposition and knew that they would never want to come forth, whether he gave them leave to sit back from fighting or not. Therefore, he granted them leave to remain behind because this maintained the pretence that they were his loyal supporters and that the Muslims were unified. Had he

not done this, they would have made known their disloyalty and this would have fractured the morale of the Muslims.

Here, some people might imagine that, had the Prophet denied the hypocrites permission to remain behind and their hypocrisy and dissent had come to light at that time, as the Prophet was making preparations for the Battle of Tabūk, because of the strength and power of Islam, people would have been spared their treachery and their efforts to sow divisions. However, Islam at that time only appeared strong in the eyes of outsiders, who feared its strength and saw the great numbers of people flocking to its banner. Within the ranks of the Muslims themselves, the reality was that they had not yet overcome hypocrisy or the maladies of the hearts and they were not yet united in their resolve. The evidence for this fact is the verses currently under discussion and virtually all of the verses between here and the end of the chapter.

They had appeared similarly strong at the Battle of Uḥud, when the enemy had assailed them on the outskirts of their home. A full third of the Muslim army fled the battle, unmoved by admonitions or calls. They even said: 'If we knew how to fight, we would have followed you!' This was a major factor in the defeat of the Muslims on that day.

Let us examine the claim that God reprimanded His Messenger for an error in his independent reasoning when he ransomed prisoners of war from the Battle of Badr: *A prophet may not take captives until he has thoroughly decimated (the enemy) in the land* (8:67).

The first problem with this argument is that it reflects a poor understanding of the verse itself, as it is plain to see that the verse does not criticise the ransoming of prisoners but the taking of prisoners in the first place—*a prophet may not take captives*—and there is no verse or narration to the effect that the Prophet commanded the Muslims to take prisoners. On the contrary, the accounts of the battle suggest that when the Prophet ordered some of the prisoners to be put to death, people became afraid that he intended to execute all of them, so they spoke to him and pleaded with him to accept ransoms for their lives instead, that this wealth might strengthen the cause of the faith. However, God rejects their pleas with the words, *You desire the transitory gains of this world, while Allah desires the Hereafter* (8:67).

This is one of the clearest pieces of evidence that the reprimand contained in the verse is actually directed specifically towards the faithful rather than the Prophet alone or the Prophet along with them. Most of the reports and traditions to the effect that this was a rebuke of the Prophet are fabrications and interpolations.

The second problem with this argument is that, if the criticism in the verse were aimed solely at the Prophet or at him along with the faithful, this would not be a reprimand for a *dhanb* in the original sense of the word, which signifies the loss of some sort of benefit. On the contrary, in the following verse, God says, *Had it not been for a prior decree of Allah, surely there would have befallen you a great punishment for what you took* (8:70), which indicates a sin had been committed, rather than an error, as no sensible person would believe that God would issue such a severe threat of punishment for something that was not a major sin. Therefore, this also shows that the criticism and reprimand contained in the verse are directed to someone other than the Prophet.

لَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ أَنْ يُجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾ إِنَّمَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَارْتَابَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِي رَيْبِهِمْ يَتَرَدَّدُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

(9:44-45) ***Those who believe in Allah and the Last Day do not ask you for leave from waging jihād with their possessions and their persons, and Allah knows best the Godwary. Only those seek a leave from you who do not believe in Allah and the Last Day, and whose hearts are in doubt, so they waver in their doubt.***

These two verses call attention to one of the traits by which the hypocrites can be identified and distinguished from the true believers, namely that they ask for permission to stay back from striving in the way of God.

God has explained this by saying that striving in the way of God with one's person and possessions is a requirement of believing in God and the Last Day with genuine faith (*īmān*), as such faith produces the quality of Godwariness (*taqwā*) in a person. What is more, the true believer was already Godwary before he had faith in God and the Last Day. Therefore, he also recognizes the duty he has to strive in the way of God with his own person and possessions, but this does not cause him to cling to the ground and ask to be excused from fighting. By contrast, the hypocrite does not truly believe in God or the Last Day and, therefore, does not benefit from the quality of Godwariness. As a result, his heart is full of doubt and hesitation, and he prefers to avoid fighting, so he asks permission to stay back and not participate in the struggle.

وَلَوْ أَرَادُوا الْخُرُوجَ لَأَعَدُّوا لَهُ عُدَّةً وَلَٰكِنْ كَرِهَ اللَّهُ انْبِعَاثَهُمْ فَثَبَّطَهُمْ

وَقِيلَ اقْعُدُوا مَعَ الْقَاعِدِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

(9:46) ***Had they desired to go forth, they would have surely made some preparations*** **(ʿudda)** ***for it; but Allah was averse to arouse them*** **(inbiʿāth)*****, so He held them back*** **(thabbaṭahum)*****, and it was said, 'Be seated with those who sit back.'***

ʿUdda ('preparations') refers to supplies and equipment; according to al-Ṭabrisī in *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, *inbiʿāth* ('to arouse') means to hasten to fulfil some goal, and *tathbīṭ* ('to hold back') means to detain someone from doing something by discouraging them from it.

Based on its content, this verse follows on from the sentence, *Allah knows that they are indeed liars* (9:42). In other words, it means *they are indeed liars* when they claim that they are unable to go forth to fight, because they did not really want to go forth at all. As, if they had genuinely wanted to go forth, they would have made some preparations to do so. This is because when someone wants to do something, they make appropriate preparations for it by gathering the necessary supplies and equipment, but these individuals did none of this.

...but Allah was averse to arouse them because of their hypocrisy, and this is—in fact—a boon to the Prophet and the faithful, as this protected them from the dissent, discord, and disagreement that the hypocrites would have undoubtedly sowed between them, had they gone forth with them.

...and it was said, 'Be seated with those who sit back': This is not a legislative or moral imperative and, therefore, it does not conflict with the divine command to muster and go forth and fight. After all, God has already commanded them through the words of His Messenger to go forth and fight, and this was the moral-legislative command. This instruction to '*Be seated with those who sit back*', by contrast, is delivered to the hypocrites on account of their corrupt character, doubt-filled hearts, and their impure intentions in wanting to stay behind. Therefore, as this is not a divine legislative commandment, it does not conflict with the command to go forth and strive in the way of God.

Notice also that God does not ascribe the command, '*Be seated with those who sit back*', to Himself. In doing so, He maintains His distance from the instruction to the hypocrites to do something that He is not pleased with. He also hints at the existence of other agents that could have delivered this command, such as Satan or the ego. Therefore, it is only ascribed indirectly to God in order to show that it was the consequence of the hypocrites' own actions, to highlight the boon it actually represented for the faithful, and to

reconcile the two outwardly divergent commands that appear in this context, namely: *...when you are told: 'Go forth in the way of Allah'* (9:38) and *...and it was said, 'Be seated with those who sit back'* (9:46).

لَوْ خَرَجُوا فِيكُمْ مَا زَادُوكُمْ إِلَّا خَبَالًا وَلَأَوْضَعُوا خِلَالَكُمْ يَبْغُونَكُمُ
الْفِتْنَةَ وَفِيكُمْ سَمَّاعُونَ لَهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

(9:47) ***Had they gone forth with you, they would have only added to your troubles*** **(khabāl)*****, and they would have surely sown dissent in your midst*** **(awḍaʿū)*****, seeking*** **(yabghūn)** ***to cause sedition*** **(fitna)** ***among you. They have some spies*** **(sammāʿūn)** ***among you, and Allah knows best the wrongdoers.***

Khabāl ('troubles') means corruption and confusion.

Īḍāʿ ('to sow dissent') means to hasten to spread evil.

Baghī ('to seek') is to pursue a goal. Therefore, *seeking to cause sedition among you* means they want *fitna* for you or amongst you.

Fitna ('sedition') can refer to any sort of tribulation, such as dissent and division in this context.

Sammāʿ ('spy') means someone who is quick to respond and agree.

The verse as a whole occurs in the context of providing an explanation for why *Allah was averse to arouse them* in the previous verse (9:46) and to show why this was, in fact, a blessing for the faithful. That is why this verse does not begin with a conjunction (such as 'and', 'so' or the like), and its meaning is clear.

لَقَدِ ابْتَغَوُا الْفِتْنَةَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَقَلَّبُوا لَكَ الْأُمُورَ حَتَّىٰ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَظَهَرَ أَمْرُ
اللَّهِ وَهُمْ كَارِهُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

(9:48) ***They certainly sought to cause sedition earlier, and upset the matters for you, until the truth came and Allah's command prevailed, much as they were averse.***

In other words, the verse means: 'I swear that these hypocrites sought to bring about tribulation, dissent, and division for the community even before this military campaign—the campaign to Tabūk—just as they did at the Battle of Uḥud when ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl withdrew from the field of battle with a third of the army and betrayed the Prophet. And they have tried to

cause disorder for you by provoking people to disagreement, urging them to disobey the Prophet and desert the army, encouraging the Jewish tribes and the idolaters to wage war on the faithful, spying on you, and other such actions. All of this continued until the truth was revealed—the truth that must be followed—and God's command became apparent—meaning the obligations of the religion—and they were averse to all of that.'

This verse, then, supports the claims of the previous verse by calling to mind other examples of the same behavior. This verse is addressed to the Prophet specifically while the previous verses spoke to the faithful generally because the issue being discussed in it is specific to the Prophet, namely that they sought to upset matters for him. By contrast, the previous verse was addressing their going forth (or lack thereof) with the people.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, concerning the verse, *If you do not help him, then Allah has already helped him...* (9:40), Ibn Mardawayh and Abū Nuʿaym in the *Dalāʾil* both narrate from Ibn ʿAbbās:

When the Messenger of God left Mecca under cover of darkness and reached the Cave of Thawr... Abū Bakr followed him, and when the Messenger of God heard someone behind him, he feared that he was being pursued. When Abū Bakr realized this, he coughed, and when the Messenger of God heard this, he recognized that it was Abū Bakr, so he stopped until he could catch up with him, and Abū Bakr followed him until they reached the cave.

When morning came, the Quraysh set out in pursuit of him. They sent for a man from the Banū Mudlij tribe who knew his appearance, who followed his tracks until he reached the cave where the Prophet was hiding, but there was a tree at its entrance. The man urinated at the base of the tree, then said: 'The one you are seeking has not gone beyond this place.' Upon hearing this, Abū Bakr was grieved, so the Messenger of God said to him: *'Do not grieve; Allah is indeed with us.'* He and Abū Bakr remained in the cave for three days, with ʿĀmir b. Fuhayra bringing them food and ʿAlī bringing them travelling gear. ʿAlī bought three camels from Bahrain and hired a guide for them. After the third night passed, ʿAlī brought the camels and the guide. The Messenger of God mounted one camel, Abū Bakr mounted another, and they set off towards Medina with the Quraysh in pursuit.

(2) In the same source, Ibn Sa'd narrates from Ibn 'Abbās, 'Alī, 'Ā'isha b. Abī Bakr, 'Ā'isha b. Qudāma, and Surāqa b. Ju'sham, weaving their accounts together:
The Messenger of God set out while the Quraysh were lying in wait at his door. He took a handful of dust and scattered it over their heads while reciting the verse: *Yā Sīn! By the Wise Qur'an!* (36:1–2).
He asked them: 'Who are you waiting for?'
They said: 'For Muḥammad!'
He said: 'By God, he has surely passed you by!'
They said: 'By God, we never saw him!'
Then they got up and shook the dirt from their heads.
The Messenger of God and Abū Bakr left the city and sheltered in the Cave of Thawr. No sooner had they entered it than a spider wove a web across its entrance.
The Quraysh pursued him intently until they reached the entrance of the cave, but one of them said: 'There has been a spider here since before Muḥammad was ever born!'

(3) In *I'lām al-warā*, there is a tradition on the relationship between Surāqa b. Ju'sham and the Messenger of God, which says that what was famous amongst the Arabs—in their poems and their stories—is that Surāqa had pursued the Prophet out of Mecca and towards Medina with the intention of killing him in order to win favour with the Quraysh. At one point, he was sure that he was about to catch up with him and accomplish his mission, when all four legs of his horse sank into the ground up to its belly. He was surprised by this, because the ground there looked solid. At this point, he realised that this was no ordinary event, but a miraculous intervention. So he called out: 'O Muḥammad! Ask your Lord to release my horse for me, and I swear by God that I will not lead anyone to you!' So the Prophet supplicated to God for him and his horse came free as easily as if its legs had been tied by a knot. Now Surāqa was an exceedingly shrewd man, and he know that this would not be the last such incident to befall him, so he said: 'Write for me a letter of protection!' So the Prophet wrote him such a letter and he left.
Muḥammad b. Isḥāq says that Abū Jahl recited some poetry about Surāqa, and Surāqa responded with some verses of his own:
By God, O Abā Ḥakam, had you witnessed / my horse's legs sink into the ground,

You would have been amazed and not doubted / that Muḥammad was a proven messenger, so who is it that conceals it?
You should keep the people off him for I / see that his affair shall one day be made clear!

Author's comments: This is also narrated in *al-Kāfī* by al-Kulaynī via his chain of narrators to Muʿāwiya b. ʿAmmār, from Imām al-Ṣādiq, and in *al-Durr al-manthūr* via a number of routes. Al-Zamakhsharī also cites it in his *Rabīʿ al-abrār*.

(4) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Saʿd and Ibn Mardawayh narrate from Ibn Muṣʿab:
I came upon Anas b. Mālik, Zayd b. Arqam, and al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba and heard them conversing. They said that on the night the Prophet was in the cave, God had bid a tree to grow in front of the Prophet to conceal him, and God had bid a spider to weave a web in front of the Prophet to conceal him, and that God had bid two wild doves to nest at the mouth of the cave... some young men of the Quraysh of the same clan arrived at the cave bearing sticks, swords, and clubs, and continued to approach until they were no more than forty cubits away from the Prophet. One of them hastened to look in the cave, but then returned to his companions, who asked him: 'Why did you not go to see what was inside the cave?' He said: 'I saw two doves nesting at the entrance of the cave, and I knew there would be no one inside.'

(5) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, ʿAbd al-Razzāq and Ibn al-Mundhir narrate from al-Zuhrī, concerning the verse, *when the two of them were in the cave* (9:40): 'This is the cave that is on the mountain called Thawr.'

Author's comments: Abundant narrations have come down to the effect that the cave mentioned in the Qur'an is a cave on Mount Thawr, which is approximately four parasangs (roughly 15 miles or 24 kilometres) from Mecca.

(6) In *Iʿlām al-warā* and *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, we read that the Messenger of God remained in the cave for three days, then God permitted him to continue his emigration, saying: 'Leave Mecca behind, O Muḥammad, for you have no helper there save ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib!' So the Messenger of God departed.
A shepherd who worked for one of the Quraysh called Ibn Arīqaṭ called out to the Messenger of God. The latter said to him: 'O Ibn Arīqaṭ, shall I place my life in your hands?'
He replied: 'In this case, I swear by God that I will protect you and not lead anyone to you! Now, tell me, where are you going, Muḥammad?'

He said: 'To Yathrib.'
He said: 'I shall go with you and show you a route that no one knows.'
The Messenger of God told him: 'Go to ʿAlī and give him the good news that God has permitted me to emigrate and that he should prepare for me a mount and provisions for travel!'
Abū Bakr told him: 'Go to my daughter Asmā' and tell her to make ready provisions and two mounts for me, and inform ʿĀmir b. Fuhayra of our situation...'—'Āmir was Abū Bakr's servant and had embraced Islam—'...and tell him to bring us the provisions and the two mounts.'
So Ibn Arīqaṭ came to ʿAlī and informed him of this, so ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib sent the provisions and mount to the Messenger of God, and Ibn Fuhayra was sent with provisions and two mounts. Whereat the Messenger of God came out of the cave and Ibn Arīqaṭ led him through a valley of palms that extended between the mountains towards Medina, keeping far from the main route, except at Qadīd, where they set down at the encampment of Umm Maʿbad.
Word had reached the Helpers that the Messenger of God was on his way to them, and they were eagerly waiting his approach until he arrived at the Qubā Mosque and set down, whereat the men and women of the city came forth to welcome him and celebrate his arrival.

Author's comments: There are numerous traditions providing details of the Emigration from Mecca to Medina narrated by historians and biographers of the Prophet from both the Shīʿī and Sunnī schools of thought. However, in spite of their abundance, they are also often mutually contradictory and confused, and carrying out an exhaustive examination of them to determine which are authentic is beyond the scope of the present work. Therefore, we have sufficed ourselves with relating those accounts upon whose contents both schools of thought are in agreement with one another in order to provide a general overview of the story.

(7) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Khaythama b. Sulaymān al-Ṭarāblusī in *Faḍā'il al-Ṣaḥāba* and Ibn ʿAsākir both relate from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib: 'Surely God censured all the people and praised Abū Bakr when He said: *If you do not help him, then Allah has already helped him when the faithless expelled him, as the second of two, when the two of them were in the cave, he said to his companion, 'Do not grieve; Allah is indeed with us.'*

Author's comments: The careful study we have carried out into the meanings of the verses that relate to the story of the Emigration, along with the authentic accounts we have thus far identified, engender serious misgivings about this narration. After all, the verses neither criticise the believers nor 'all the people' (per the narration above). When Verse of the Cave says, '*If you do not help him...*', it is referring back to the verse, *O you who have faith! What is the matter with you that when you are told: 'Go forth in the way of Allah,' you sink heavily to the ground?* (9:38). What definitive traditions have said about the phrase, '*sink heavily to the ground*' is not that it refers to all of the believers, whether individually or collectively, as many of them did, in fact, rush to answer the call of the Messenger to prepare to fight, it was only a group of hypocrites and believers who were weak in faith that sunk to the ground in the manner described here.

Therefore, even though the phrase, '*O you who have faith!*' encompasses all of the believers, the criticism that follows it is only directed to a particular group of them. This is no different to when God says to the Jews, *'Then why would you kill the prophets of God...?'* (2:91) and other instances where it is evident that God is referring to a specific segment of a larger group rather than the whole group. There are many such instances of this in the Qur'an, but the Qur'an also says that the due of those who do righteous deeds is never lost and the reward of the virtuous is never squandered. This is the case even if they are a minority, such that they appear to be included in such general statements, as the Qur'an then clarifies that they are not included in such censures and rebukes, but rather they are worthy of praise and reward. This is something we will see later in this chapter of the Qur'an, when God praises and thanks the faithful for their noble efforts: *... the faithful, men and women, are comrades of one another...* (9:71).

So, even though these verses that were revealed about the campaign to Tabūk are addressed to all of the believers—whether they hastened to respond to the Messenger's summons or whether they clung to the ground—without exception, this means they include all of the Companions as well, including Abū Bakr himself. However, as we have already said, God follows this by affirming the reward due to those who strive in obedience to Him and respond to the divine summons and thanking them for their devotion in the verses below.

Therefore, if the phrase, '*If you do not help him...*'—which is directed to those who clung to the ground instead of answering the Prophet's call—was intended as a rebuke to 'all the people' without exception, then Abū Bakr

would have to be included in this rebuke as well, just as others were rebuked for failing to come to the Prophet's aid or for being slow to answer his call. At the same time, the verse itself cannot be read as calling attention to Abū Bakr coming to the Prophet's aid when it says, *then Allah has already helped him when the faithless expelled him, as the second of two, when the two of them were in the cave, he said to his companion, 'Do not grieve; Allah is indeed with us.'* If anything, it shows that the Prophet came to Abū Bakr's aid when he reassured him and comforted him with the words, *'Do not grieve; Allah is indeed with us.'*

Moreover, you will recall from our discussion of the verse that the only assistance it is actually highlighting is the assistance given directly by God to His Messenger in this situation in contrast to the absence of any assistance from any of the believers and their abandonment of him. Therefore, the only certain meaning we can extract from the verse is actually that when he was hiding in the cave, no one came to the Prophet's aid except God Himself.

This meaning is itself the best evidence for the fact that the pronouns in the remainder of the verse—*Then Allah sent down His composure upon him, and strengthened him with hosts you did not see, and He made the word of the faithless the lowest; and the word of Allah is the highest*—refer to the Prophet alone, as the sentence occurs in the context of demonstrating how only God came to his aid in that situation by providing a powerful supernatural form of assistance that needed no human intermediaries. This supernatural assistance was the sending down of composure (*sakīna*), strengthening him with invisible hosts, making the word of the faithless the lowest, and elevating the word of truth, for God is all-mighty and all-wise.

As for any other merits in this verse for which Abū Bakr could be given credit besides coming to the Prophet's aid, this would have to be his being *the second of the two* or *his companion*. There is no disputing that if a person is 'the second of the two' and the first is the Prophet or if he is described as a 'companion' of the Prophet in the Qur'an, this is indeed a source of pride and something that a person should value. However, this is a kind of merit that bestows social status on a person or value in the eyes of their community. By contrast, the Qur'an, in its logic, has a different criterion for this and assigns a different meaning to virtue and honor compared to what society means by these words and one which is, in fact, higher and nobler than social conventions. What the Qur'an deems virtuous and honorable is the dignity of being a divine servant and the level of one's closeness to God.

However, merely being physically present with the Prophet or counted alongside him does not guarantee anything like that. God has repeatedly

said in the Qur'an that labelling oneself with various names and titles that are held in high regard by the masses or esteemed by society have no value to God, because people will be held to account for what is in their hearts rather than what their outward appearances show or whence they trace their lineage.

And with regards to the Companions of the Prophet and even his closest followers, God has said most eloquently: *Muḥammad, the Messenger of Allah, and those who are with him are hard against the faithless and merciful amongst themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating... Allah has promised those of them who have faith and do righteous deeds forgiveness and a great reward* (48:29). Consider the praise that appears at the beginning of the verse and the conditions that God attached to this praise that appear at its end, and ponder on the significance of this.

What we have presented so far has only been a selection of the discussions surrounding the verses and narrations concerning the Emigration. However, going beyond this amount will take us beyond the bounds of Qur'anic commentary and into the realm of theology, which is not our intent at present.

(8) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is narrated by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh, al-Bayhaqī in his *Dalā'il*, and Ibn ʿAsākir in his *Ta'rīkh* from Ibn ʿAbbās, concerning the verse, *Then Allah sent down His composure upon him* (9:40): 'Upon Abū Bakr, because the Prophet always had composure with him.'

In the same source, al-Khaṭīb narrates in his *Ta'rīkh* from Ḥabīb b. Abī Thābit about the same passage: 'Upon Abū Bakr, because the Prophet already had composure with him.'

Author's comments: We have already explained how the pronouns in this passage actually refer to the Prophet based on the context of the verse. Moreover, insofar as these narrations are weak since they only go back to Ḥabīb and Ibn ʿAbbās, neither of whom were present for these events, and, therefore, their words have no authority on this matter.

As for the argument they make, namely that the Prophet already had composure and, therefore, did not need it to be sent down upon him again, this is an assumption that has already been refuted by what God said about the Battle of Ḥunayn, namely: *Then Allah sent down His composure upon His Messenger and upon the faithful* (9:26). This is also true regarding the verse in Sūrah al-Fatḥ that discusses the story of Ḥudaybiyya. Both of these verses explicitly describe composure being sent down upon the Prophet on specific occasions, and there is no reason for the situation to be any different in the case of the cave.

The author of *al-Manār* was aware of this objection, and so he interpreted the key statement in both of these narrations, that the Prophet always had composure with him, in a different manner. He said that this composure was already with the Prophet in the cave, and that this indicates that when God sent down composure upon him it was actually being sent down on the one who was with him rather than himself, and perhaps the narration of Ḥabīb is closer to this meaning than that of Ibn ʿAbbās.

After presenting these two narrations, the author of *al-Manār* says: 'Some commentators have, on the basis of linguistic and rational arguments, clarified that the Prophet was not facing any new fear, anxiety, or grief in the cave (and, therefore, the recipient must be Abū Bakr), while others have argued that the pronoun should refer to the nearest noun. However, neither argument is particularly strong.

Others have said that the pronoun refers to the Prophet and that just because God sent down composure upon him, this does not mean he was necessarily afraid, anxious, or grieved. This, however, is also a weak position because the Qur'an mentions God sending down composure after invoking the feeling of grief (*ḥuzn*), suggesting that it was sent down because of this feeling, when the Prophet said to his companion: '*Do not grieve....*'

As for the claim that the Prophet was not afflicted by fear or anxiety at the time, are they basing this on the fact that the verse itself or a reliable narration does not explicitly mention him being affected thus? If so, then God's discussion of the Battle of Ḥunayn or the events of Ḥudaybiyya also do not mention the Prophet being fearful, grieved, or anxious, nor is there any reliable narration that describes him in these terms. But, if this was the case, then why would God need to send down composure upon him in those two situations?

Now, if they admit that sending down composure does entail anxiety, fear, or grief, which is impossible for the Prophet, as we have discussed, then what? When God sends down a divine blessing, this does not entail that the recipient of this blessing was experiencing the opposite state of affliction prior to this. It is perfectly possible for God to send down mercy after mercy, blessing after blessing, or faith and guidance after faith and guidance, and so on. The Qur'an has explicitly stated this on a number of occasions.

As for the claim that the pronoun '*him*' refers to the Prophet, this is also weak because the sending down of composure is linked to the Prophet telling Abū Bakr not to grieve, which suggests that it was sent down in response to these events, namely after *he said to his companion, "Do not grieve; Allah is indeed with us."*

The problem with the author of *al-Manār*'s argument is that, while there is no doubt that the conjunction '*then*' (*fa*) in phrase, '*Then Allah sent down His composure...*', shows that it follows logically from the previous passage. However, this does not mean that these events happened immediately one after another—no one claims that *fa* always indicates events that happen one after another.

Therefore, it is necessary to read the phrase, '*Then Allah sent down his composure*', as following logically from the passage before it, but not necessarily only from the part of that passage that is immediately before it, unless the author of *al-Manār* accepts the position that a pronoun must always refer to the nearest noun, but he has already described this as a 'weak' position.

Therefore, the proper way to connect this phrase to what comes before it is as follows: '*then Allah has already helped him* in such-and-such a situation...', in which case *then* does not signal temporal arrangement but rather the fact that the phrase is providing a detailed explanation after a general one, which would render the meaning: '*then Allah has already helped him* at the time when such-and-such events happened, *then Allah sent down His composure upon Him and strengthened him with hosts you did not see, and He made the word of the faithless the lowest....*'

Therefore, it is clear that the position he finally settles upon is the very same position he initially dismisses as 'weak,' namely that the pronoun should refer back to the nearest noun (which is a baseless assumption), except that he has phrased it differently.

This discussion also clarifies the debate surrounding another narration that is transmitted by al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, in which Ibn Mardawayh narrates from Anas b. Mālik: 'The Prophet and Abū Bar went into the Cave of Hirā', and Abū Bakr said to the Prophet: "If anyone sees our footprints, they will surely find both of us." Then he told him: "What do you think of two people for whom God is the third? Surely God will send down composure upon you and strengthen me with hosts you do not see."'

The first problem with this narration is that it says this took place in the Cave of Hirā', when it has been established by numerous narrations that the cave in question is actually the Cave of Thawr.

The second problem is that the narration explicitly makes a distinction between the two instances of the pronoun '*him*' in the Qur'anic verse when it says, 'God will send down composure upon you and strengthen me with hosts you do not see', because it makes the first pronoun refer to Abū Bakr.

In his *Rūḥ al-maʿānī*, al-Ālūsī presents the narration in this way: 'God

will send down his composure upon you and strengthen you with hosts you do not see.' So, he has both of the pronouns in the verse refer to Abū Bakr rather than the Prophet.

It is not clear which of the two phrasing is the original phrasing of the tradition and which has been distorted. However, al-Ālūsī's version creates further complications through the addition of the phrase 'and strengthen you with hosts you do not see' because the pronoun 'you' in 'strengthen you' is singular, but the pronoun 'you' in 'you do not see' is plural. However, there was no one else in the cave besides him and Abū Bakr, so who would the Prophet have been addressing with the plural 'you' in this tradition?

(9) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, concerning the verse, *Were it an accessible gain or a short journey* (9:42), we read: 'Were it some easy war booty, *they would have surely followed you*.'

(10) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Zurāra, Ḥumrān, and Muḥammad b. Muslim, from Imām al-Bāqir and Imām al-Ṣādiq about the verse, *Were it an accessible gain or a short journey, they would have surely followed you*: 'They were perfectly able to go forth and God knew that, were it for an accessible gain or short journey, they surely would have done so.'

Author's comments: Shaykh al-Ṣadūq narrates a similar narration in his *Maʿānī al-akhbār* via his chain of narrators from ʿAbd al-Aʿlā b. Aʿyan, from Imām al-Ṣādiq.

(11) Also in *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, regarding the verse, *but the distance seemed too far to them*, we read:

It means the distance to Tabūk, and the reason for this is that the Messenger of God undertook no longer journey than this nor any journey harder than this.

The reason for the expedition to Tabūk was that the summer caravan had come to Medina from Syria with food and textiles. They were Nabateans and they spread word in Medina that the Romans had mustered a huge army to march against the Messenger of God and that Emperor Heraclius himself was leading the army, which had been joined by the Ghassānids, as well as the Judhām, the Bahrā', and the ʿĀmila tribes. He had sent the army ahead to Balqā', while encamping himself at Homs.

The Messenger of God sent his Companions to Tabūk, which was in the vicinity of Balqā', sent word to the tribes around him, to Mecca, and to those of the Khuzāʿa, Muzayna, and Juhayna tribes who had

embraced Islam and called on them to muster for *jihād*.

The Messenger of God gave orders to his army to proceed to Thanniyyat al-Wadāʿ— then he ordered the people with wealth to give assistance to those who had no means to wage war, and whoever had any means at his disposal brought it forth, and the people encouraged one another to do likewise.

Then the Messenger of God got up and delivered a sermon, in which he praised and magnified God, then said: 'O people! Surely the most truthful discourse is the Book of God, the most worthy speech is the word of piety, the best nation is the nation of Abraham, the best way is the way of Muḥammad, the most noble discourse is the remembrance of God, the best of stories are found in this Qur'an, the best affairs are its ordinances, and the worst affairs are innovations that come after it. The best guidance is the guidance of the Prophets, the most noble of those slain are the martyrs, and the most severe blindness consists of going astray after guidance. The best deeds are those that bring benefit, the best guidance is that which is followed, and the worst blindness is that of the heart, and the hand that gives is better than the hand that receives. Sufficing oneself with less is better than squandering abundance, the worst excuse is the one offered at the time of death, and the worst remorse is that felt on the Day of Judgement. There are people who only come to Friday prayers rarely, and only remember God fleetingly. One of the gravest sins is a lying tongue, the best wealth is the wealth of the soul, the best provision is Godwariness, the source of all wisdom is the fear of God, and the best thing to be cast into one's heart is certainty. Doubt is from disbelief, wailing for the deceased is ignorance, stinginess is the purulence of hell, drunkenness is the embers of hell, poetry is from the Devil, and wine is the gatherer of all sinfulness. Women are the ropes of the Devil and young men are a branch of madness. The worst source of income is to take usury, and the worst meal is to devour the property of orphans. Felicitous is he who admonishes others, and wretched is he who is wretched in his mother's womb. All of you will one day fill a grave of four cubits, and the affair will reach its end, and each affair is judged by its outcome. The most usurious form of usury is lying, and whatever will be is already near at hand. Reviling a believer is sinfulness, killing a believer is disbelief. To eat his flesh through backbiting is to disobey God directly, and a believer's property is no

less sacred than his blood. Whoever relies on God, God will suffice him, and whoever is steadfast will triumph. Whoever forgives, God will forgive him, and whoever suppresses his anger, God will reward him. Whoever endures a loss with patience, God will compensate him. Whoever pursues reputation, God will disgrace him. Whoever fasts, God will augment him, and whoever disobeys God, He will punish him. O God, forgive me and my community! O God forgive me and my community! I seek God's forgiveness for me and for you.'

When they heard the Messenger of God's words, the people were keen to go and fight, and the tribes to whom he had called upon to fight came forth. A group of hypocrites and others held back, however. The Messenger of God met al-Jadd b. Qays and said to him: 'O Abū Wahb, will you not go forth with us on this expedition? Perhaps you will win some spoils!' He responded: 'O Messenger of God, my people surely know that there is no one more desirous of spoils than I, and I worry that if I were to go with you and sight these spoils I would not be able to contain myself, so do not put me to temptation but give me leave to remain behind.' And he told a group of his people: 'Do not go forth to fight in the hot months!'

His son told him: 'You go to the Messenger and say one thing, then you tell your people not to go forth to fight in the hot months! Surely God will reveal something about you in this Qur'an that the people will recite until the Day of Resurrection!'

And, in fact, God revealed the following verse to the Messenger: *Among them there are some who say, 'Give me leave, and do not put me to temptation'* (9:49).

Then al-Jadd b. Qaysh said: 'Does Muḥammad wish that we should fight the Romans in the same way as we fight others? Not a single one of them will ever come back!'

Author's comments: Many narrations have come down in both Shīʿa and Sunnī sources that are similar in meaning to this.

(12) In *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, al-Ṣadūq narrates via his chain of narrators from ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. al-Jahm the following:

I attended the assembly of al-Ma'mūn while ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā was with him. He said to him: 'O scion of the Messenger of God, do you not claim that the prophets are all infallible?' He said: 'Indeed.' So, al-Ma'mūn said: 'Then explain to me the meaning of the verse, *May Allah excuse you! Why did you grant them leave...?*' (9:43).

Al-Riḍā responded: 'This is one of the verses that is in the form of an indirect address—God speaks to the Prophet but intends for his community to hear it—the same is true of the verse, *If you ascribe a partner to Allah your works shall fail and you shall surely be among the losers* (39:65), and the verse, *Had We not fortified you, certainly you might have inclined toward them a bit* (17:74).' Al-Ma'mūn said: 'You have spoken truthfully, O scion of the Messenger of God!'

Author's comments: The content of this narration agrees with what we have previously said in explanation of this verse. This is not the case for the claim that some commentators have made to the effect that the Prophet was rebuked for granting the hypocrites leave because this had not been the best course of action (*tark al-awlā*), as this does not fit with the verse being a form of indirect address.

(13) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 'Abd al-Razzāq in the *Muṣannaf*, and Ibn Jarīr both narrate from 'Amr b. Maymūn al-Awdī: 'Two things that the Prophet did that were not commanded by God: Giving permission to the hypocrites to remain behind and taking prisoners of war. So, God sent down the verse, *May Allah excuse you! Why did you grant them leave...?*'

Author's comments: We have already discussed the problems with the content of this tradition above.

(14) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī,* about the verse, *Had they desired to go forth, they would have surely made some preparations for it* (9:46) and the verses after it, we read:

Some of those who did not answer the summons of the Messenger of God were persons with sincere intentions and real understanding of the religion who were neither affected by doubt nor hesitation. They said: 'We will join the Messenger of God.'

One of them was Abū Khaythama, a powerful man with two wives and two pavilions. His wives had sprinkled water on his two pavilions, brought cool water for him, and prepared food for him. When he came to his trellises and saw them, he said: 'No, by God, this is not fair. Shall the Messenger of God, whose sins past and future have been forgiven by God, go forth in the heat and dust laden with weapons to fight in the way of God, while the mighty Abū Khaythama sits in his pavilion with his two beautiful wives? No, by God, this is not fair at all.'

So, he took brought his camel, saddled it, and set off to join the

Messenger of God. The people saw a rider approaching on the road and informed the Messenger of God of this. He said: 'It must be Abū Khaythama.' He came forth and informed the Prophet of what had happened, and the Prophet invoked good upon him and prayed for him.

Abū Dharr likewise did not join the Messenger of God for three days, and this was because his camel was weak. He joined the Messenger after three days after his camel had refused to go any further in the middle of the way, so he had left his camel behind and taken only what he could carry with him. Then, at the height of the day, the Muslims saw a figure approaching, and the Messenger of God said: 'It must be Abū Dharr!' They said: 'It is indeed Abū Dharr!' Then the Messenger of God said: 'Go to him, for he is thirsty!' So they took water to him.

Abū Dharr came to the Messenger of God carrying a vessel of water. The Messenger of God said to him: 'O Abū Dharr, you have water and yet you go thirsty?' He said: 'Yes, O Messenger of God, may my parents be your ransom, I came upon a rock in which had pooled some rainwater, so I took a sip and found it to be cold and sweet. I said to myself: "I will not drink this until the Messenger of God drinks it!"'

The Messenger of God said: 'O Abū Dharr, may God have mercy on you, you live alone, you will die alone, you will be raised from the dead alone, and you will enter paradise alone. People from Iraq will be gladdened by you, they shall prepare your corpse, bathe and shroud you, pray over you, and bury you.'

A group of the hypocrites also did not respond to the call of God's Messenger and neither did some believers who had no trace of hypocrisy upon them. Amongst them were the poet Kaʿb b. Mālik, Murāra b. Rabīʿ, and Hilāl b. Umayya al-Rāfiʿī. When God accepted their repentance, Kaʿb said: 'I was never as strong as I was at that time, when the Messenger of God set out for Tabūk, and I never had two mounts except during those days.' I kept telling myself: 'I will set off the day after tomorrow, for I must make preparations.' But I was lax and sluggish for several days after the Prophet set off, I went to the marketplace but could not find what I needed. Then I met Hilāl b. Umayya and Murāra b. al-Rabīʿ, and they had also stayed behind. So, we agreed that we would go to the market the next day, but we

still did not find what we needed. So, we kept saying: 'We will set off the day after tomorrow.' Then word reached us that the Messenger of God was returning, and we felt ashamed.

When the Messenger of God arrived, we went to welcome him back. We gave him greetings of peace, but he did not respond and turned away from us. We gave greetings of peace to our believing brothers, but they did not respond to us. Word of this reached our families and they stopped talking to us. We would go to the mosque and no one would greet us or speak to us. Our womenfolk went to the Messenger of God and said: 'We have heard you are upset with our husbands, should we leave them?' He responded: 'Do not leave them, but do not be intimate with them either.'

When Kaʿb b. Mālik and his two comrades saw what had become of them, they said: 'There is no place for us in Medina now, because neither the Messenger of God, nor our believing brothers, nor our families will speak to us.' So, they decided they would go to dwell on a mountain and remain there until God forgave them or they died. They went to Mount Dhubāb near Medina, where they remained fasting. Their families would bring them food and set it down to one side then turn away without talking to them.

They remained in this state for many days, crying and lamenting day and night, asking God to forgive them. After a long time had passed, Kaʿb said to them: 'Friends, God and His Messenger are displeased with us, our families are displeased with us, and our brothers have become displeased with us, such that none will even speak to us. Why are we not likewise displeased with one another?' So they separated to different parts of the mountain and swore not to speak to one another until they died or God forgave them. So they remained in this state for three days, with each of them on a different part of the mountain, and none of the three saw any of the others nor spoke to them. Then, on the third night, the Messenger of God was in the house of Umm Salama when God revealed to him that they had repented: *Certainly Allah turned clemently to the Prophet and the Emigrants and the Helpers, who followed him in the hour of difficulty* (9:118). Imām al-Ṣādiq later said: 'This is how the verse was revealed, and it refers to Abū Dharr, Abū Khaythama, and ʿUmayr b. Wahb, who had stayed behind but then later joined the Messenger of God.'

Then about the three on the mountain, it was revealed, ... *and to the*

three who were left behind. The Imām said: 'It means the three who had disobeyed, for if they had simply been "left behind" there would have been no blame upon them.' *When the earth became narrow for them in spite of its expanse*, because neither the Messenger of God, nor their brethren, nor their families would speak to them, such that the whole city of Medina became narrow for them until they left it behind, *and their own souls weighed heavily on them* because they swore not to speak to one another and dispersed across the mountain. It was then that God accepted their repentance, because He knew the sincerity of their intention.'

Author's comments: We shall discuss the meaning of these two verses and the traditions about them below.

(15) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from al-Mughīra: 'I heard him say about the verse, *Had they desired to go forth, they would have surely made some preparations for it*: "Preparations mean intentions, in other words: 'Had they really had the intention, they would have gone forth.'"'

Author's comments: In addition to its evident weakness in terms of its chain of narrators and ambiguity about its source, this explanation does not accord with the wording of the verse.

(16) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is narrated by Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn al-Mundhir from al-Ḥasan: "Abd Allāh b. Ubayy, ʿAbd Allāh b. Nabtal, and Rifāʿa b. Zayd b. Tābūt were the leaders of the hypocrites, and they schemed against Islam and its people. The following verse was revealed about them: *They certainly sought to cause sedition earlier, and upset the matters for you, until the truth came and Allah's command prevailed, much as they were averse*' (9:48).

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Verses 49–63

These verses continue the discussion of the hypocrites and provide a description of their condition. They mention some of their words and actions, as well as what these reveal about their wretched inner condition and erroneous beliefs.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَقُولُ ائْذَنْ لِي وَلَا تَفْتِنِّي ۚ أَلَا فِي الْفِتْنَةِ سَقَطُوا ۗ وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

(9:49) ***Among them there are some who say, 'Give me leave, and do not put me to temptation* (fitna).*' Look! They have already fallen into temptation and indeed hell besieges the faithless.***

Based on the context, the word *fitna* here either means something that tempts and deceives a person or general calamity and misfortune.

In the first case, the statement would mean: 'Permit me to stay behind and not go forth to fight, and do not put me to temptation by describing the spoils and riches that I could win by coming with you, lest you tempt me into going forth.' In the second case, it would mean: 'Permit me to stay behind and do not put me to tribulation by making me come with you to the battlefield!'

God responds to this statement of theirs by saying, *Look! They have already fallen into temptation*, meaning that they have already been seized by the *fitna* they were afraid of before they have even set forth. They have erred, for their disbelief, hypocrisy, and evil character have led them to utter this statement, which is the very temptation or tribulation they were seeking to avoid, for Satan has tempted and deceived them and their disbelief and going stray will lead them into tribulation.

This is their condition while they are still in the life of this world, as for in the Hereafter, hell encompasses the faithless in the Hereafter in the same way that temptation has encompassed them in this world. Therefore, when God says, *they have already fallen into temptation*, followed by *and indeed hell besieges the faithless*, it is as though both of these statements mean the same thing, namely that they have fallen into calamity and tribulation in both this world and the next.

In fact, we can read the phrase, *and indeed hell besieges the faithless*, as meaning that it not only awaits them in the next life but already besieges them while they are in this world, which is something also indicated by the verses that discuss the physical manifestation of a person's deeds (*tajassum al-aʿmāl*).

إِنْ تُصِبْكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ تُصِبْكَ مُصِيبَةٌ يَقُولُوا قَدْ أَخَذْنَا أَمْرَنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَيَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ فَرِحُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

(9:50) ***If some good* (ḥasana) *should befall you, it upsets them; but if an adversity* (muṣība) *befalls you, they say, 'We had already taken our precautions in advance' and they go away exulting.***

Based on the context, the terms *good* (*ḥasana*) and *adversity* here refer to the outcomes of battle for those who fought in it, so 'good' refers to victory and spoils, while 'adversity' refers to death, injury, and defeat.

They say, 'We had already taken our precautions in advance': This alludes to the fact that they had taken precautions against this evil before it had occurred, as if their affair was out of their hands, but they had taken charge of it and not allowed matters to go awry for themselves.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is that these hypocrites' hearts are against you: If you triumph and win spoils, this will displease them, but if you are killed, wounded, or otherwise affected by adversity, they will brag that they protected themselves from this evil in advance and turn away, pleased with themselves.

God responds to this statement with two answers in the two following verses, namely, *say, 'Nothing will befall us...'* and *Say, 'Do you await...'*, which we will discuss presently.

قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَانَا ۚ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

(9:51) ***Say, 'Nothing will befall us except what Allah has ordained for us. He is our patron* (huwa mawlā)*, and in Allah let all the faithful put their trust.'***

In short, it is God alone who looks after our affairs—as shown by the statement, *He is our patron*, which is phrased in such a way as to indicate exclusivity—and we have no say in the matter, nor any control over these apparent

causes. On the contrary, the truth is that the affair rests entirely with God and He has afore ordained whatever good or evil and benefit or harm will reach us. This being the case, we should only focus on obeying His commands and striving to uphold His cause. It is God's will that determines whatever good or bad will befall us—God's servants must turn over their affairs to Him, and this is the meaning of trusting in God (*tawakkul*).

From this, the following becomes apparent: The phrase, *and in Allah let all the faithful put their trust*, is not detached from the rest of the verse but actually follows on from it and complements its meaning. Therefore, the meaning becomes: God is the one who looks after our affairs and we believe in Him; this requires us to place our trust in Him and to hand over our affairs to Him without preferring for ourselves any outcome, whether good or bad. If something good befalls us, this is a blessing from Him, and if something bad befalls us, this was also His will, and there is no blame or reproach upon us for this, nor will our hearts be saddened or grieved by any outcome. As God says elsewhere in the Qur'an: *No affliction visits the earth or yourselves but it is in a Book before We bring it about—that is indeed easy for Allah—so that you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor exult for what comes your way* (57:23). *No affliction visits except by Allah's leave. Whoever has faith in Allah, He guides his heart, and Allah has knowledge of all things* (64:11). *That is because Allah is the protector of the faithful* (47:11). *... and Allah is the guardian of the faithful* (3:68). *It is Allah who is the Guardian...* (42:9).

As you can see, these other verses all contain the foundations of this reality that the present verse expounds in response to the false beliefs of the hypocrites. In other words, God is the sole guardian of all, and no one except Him has any say in the affair. If a person believes in God and recognizes the station of his Lord, then he knows this and he knows that he must place his trust in his Lord and turn all of his affairs over to his Lord's will and decision. He should neither exult in any good thing that befalls him, nor should he be grieved by any affliction that visits him.

It is only out of ignorance that a person is upset when he sees something good reach his enemy or that he becomes glad when an affliction visits them, for this has nothing to do with him. This is the first answer that God gives to the hypocrites who are upset when some good befalls the faithful but exult when a misfortune befalls them.

Some commentators appear to have understood the term *mawlā* in this verse in the sense of 'helper.' Likewise, they argue that the phrase, *and in Allah let all the faithful put their trust*, is separate from the rest of the verse

and is merely a command addressed to the faithful to put their trust in God. However, the context of these two verses does not support such a reading.

قُلْ هَلْ تَرَبَّصُونَ بِنَا إِلَّا إِحْدَى الْحُسْنَيَيْنِ ۖ وَنَحْنُ نَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمْ أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِعَذَابٍ مِنْ عِنْدِهِ أَوْ بِأَيْدِينَا ۖ فَتَرَبَّصُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُتَرَبِّصُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

(9:52) ***Say, 'Do you await anything to befall us except one of the two excellences* (ḥusnayayn)*? But we await that Allah shall visit on you a punishment, from Him, or by our hands. So wait! We too are waiting along with you.'***

In this verse, the two excellences are, in fact, the '*good*' and '*adversity*' mentioned in the previous one. The hypocrites are upset when some good befalls the Prophet but gladdened when some misfortune befalls him, and they say, *'We had already taken our precautions in advance.'* In other words, they are waiting to see whether good or ill befalls the faithful.

However, both good and adversity are, in reality, good from the perspective of the teachings of Islam, as 'good' contains both good in this world and a great reward with God, while adversity—whether this martyrdom or any form of difficulty or hardship that affects someone—is a cause of God being pleased with a person and a source of eternal and everlasting divine reward in the hereafter.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'We and you are both waiting to see what becomes of the other. The difference is that you are waiting to see which of two outcomes will befall us, and both of these outcomes are good: Either we will triumph over our enemies and win riches, or we will give our lives in the path of God. On the other hand, we are waiting to see whether God will punish you directly, such as a punishment from the heavens, or whether He will punish you by our hands by commanding us to fight you and cleanse the earth of your evil presence, and we will be successful in either case. If any of the outcomes you are awaiting befall us, we are happy, and if any of the outcomes we are awaiting befall you, we are happy. So, wait! We too are waiting with you!' This is a second response to the statement of the hypocrites.

Note that the first verse spoke about good and adversity befalling the Prophet, while the answer given in the second and third verse speaks about adversity befalling the Prophet and the faithful together because of their

following him and their sharing in whatever good or ill befalls him.

قُلْ أَنْفِقُوا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا لَنْ يُتَقَبَّلَ مِنْكُمْ ۖ إِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

(9:53) ***Say, 'Spend willingly or unwillingly, it shall never be accepted from you; for you are indeed a transgressing lot.'***

Here, the command to '*spend*' is used in the sense of a conditional and to indicate the absence of any prohibition on them spending, while the phrase '*willingly or unwillingly*' conveys the meaning of 'under any circumstances.' However, this is to indicate that no matter what they do, their actions will have no effect, *it shall never be accepted from you*—this is the reason for the command. And the reason that this spending shall not be accepted is provided at the end of the verse: *for you are indeed a transgressing lot*.

Hence, the meaning of the verse is as follows: 'We will not prevent you from spending your wealth, whether you do so willingly or because you feel compelled to do so, for it is a pointless act that will never be accepted from you, because you are a transgressing people, and God does not accept the deeds of transgressors.' As God has said elsewhere: *Allah accepts only from the Godwary* (5:27).

وَمَا مَنَعَهُمْ أَنْ تُقْبَلَ مِنْهُمْ نَفَقَاتُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَبِرَسُولِهِ وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كُسَالَىٰ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كَارِهُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

(9:54) ***Nothing stops their charities from being accepted except that they have no faith in Allah and His Messenger and do not perform the prayer but lazily, and do not spend but reluctantly.***

This verse provides a more detailed account of why their spending will not be accepted by God; in other words, an explanation of the nature of their transgression (*fisq*). Disbelief in God and His Messenger, laziness in performing prayers, and a reluctance to spend in the way of God are the pillars of their hypocrisy.

فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

(9:55) ***So let not their wealth and children impress you: Allah only desires to punish them with these in the life of this world, and that their souls may be wrenched out while they are faithless.***

'To be impressed' with something (*iʿjāb*) means to be pleased by the beauty or excellence one perceives in it, 'to be wrenched out' (*zuhūq*) means for something to depart with great difficulty, and some have said its original meaning is 'to perish.'

In this verse, God forbids His Prophet from being impressed by the wealth and offspring of the hypocrites—specifically, by their abundance, based on the context of the verse. The reason for this prohibition is that this wealth and these offspring—which undoubtedly occupy a person's mind—are not a blessing that will lead a person towards happiness, but rather a tribulation that will bring them misery. This is because God, the One who bestowed these things upon them, only wishes to punish them in this world and to take their souls while they are faithless.

After all, this life, which living beings imagine to be an innate source of happiness and respite, in reality, only provides this happiness and respite if it follows its proper course. In other words, if the human being adopts its most positive elements, such as beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds, without being distracted by things that bring him neither good or benefit. This, and only this, is the life untouched by death, the respite unmixed with hardship, and the pleasure uncontaminated by pain. For this is life under the patronage of God, as He says elsewhere: *Look! The friends of Allah will indeed have no fear nor will they grieve* (10:62).

As for someone who becomes distracted by this world, is taken in by its superficial attractions such as wealth and children, and allows himself to be distracted by the false promises and farfetched hopes that appear to him therein and with which the devils seek to tempt him, he will fall victim to the contradictions of physical faculties and material enjoyments. He will suffer the most severe torment from the very things that he imagines, based on their surface appearances, to bring him happiness and enjoyment in this world. It is clear that the more the world turns towards a person, and the more a person enjoys it in the form of wealth and children, the further they stray from the position of divine servanthood and the nearer they edge towards the precipice of destruction and spiritual torment. Such a person is convulsed between the fickle and contradictory means of this world and made to suffer the vicissitudes of its states. In fact, that which these heedless ones call happiness and

ease is nothing more than narrowness and misery, as God says: *But whoever disregards My remembrance, his shall be a wretched life, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him blind. He will say, 'My Lord! Why have You raised me blind, though I used to see?' He will say: 'So it is. Our signs came to you, but you forgot them, and thus you will be forgotten today'* (20:124–126).

The end result of a person straying from the remembrance of his Lord is that he will become immersed in this world and its delusions, thinking that this will bring him happiness in life and peace to his heart. With this false idea, he becomes immersed in temptations and hardships and is cast between them, wrongly imagining them to be blessings. Finally, he disbelieves in his Lord and leaves behind the station of divine servanthood: *Allah only desires to punish them with these in the life of this world*, and this is how God draws a person into ruin through granting them respite, as per the verses: *We will draw them imperceptibly into ruin, whence they do not know. And I will grant them respite, for My devising is indeed sure* (7:183).

وَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُمْ لَمِنْكُمْ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْكُمْ وَلَٰكِنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ يَفْرَقُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾
لَوْ يَجِدُونَ مَلْجَأً أَوْ مَغَارَاتٍ أَوْ مُدَّخَلًا لَوَلَّوْا إِلَيْهِ وَهُمْ يَجْمَحُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

(9:56-57) *They swear by Allah that they belong to you, but they do not belong to you. Rather they are a frightened lot* (qawmun yafraqūn). *If they could find a refuge* (malja'), *or a hideout* (maghārāt), *or a hole* (muddakhkhal), *they would turn to it in frantic haste* (yajmaḥūn).

Yafrqūn ('to be frightened') means to be anxious because you expect some harm to befall you.

Malja' ('refuge') is a place in which you take shelter to protect yourself from harm.

Maghār ('hideout') is a place into which you can take cover and hide from sight, it is also used to denote a cave or tunnel in the side of a mountain.

Muddakhkhal is a passive participle of a Form VIII (*Bāb al-Ifti'āl*) verb and denotes a path into which one can slip surreptitiously.

Yajmaḥūn means to move with such haste that nothing can detain you.

The remainder of the verse's meaning is obvious.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَلْمِزُكَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ فَإِنْ أُعْطُوا مِنْهَا رَضُوا وَإِنْ لَمْ يُعْطَوْا
مِنْهَا إِذَا هُمْ يَسْخَطُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

(9:58) ***There are some of them who blame you*** **(yalmizu-ka)** ***regarding charities: if they are given from them, they are pleased, but if they are not given from them, behold, they are displeased.***

Yalmizu means 'to blame or reproach' someone, but they would only reproach him about charities if he did not give them anything because they were not entitled to it, or for other reasons, as indicated by the remainder of the verse.

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ رَضُوا مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ سَيُؤْتِينَا اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَرَسُولُهُ إِنَّا إِلَى اللَّهِ رَاغِبُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

(9:59) ***If only they had been pleased with what Allah and His Messenger gave them, and had said, 'Allah is sufficient for us; Allah will give to us out of His grace, and His Messenger. Indeed to Allah do we eagerly turn.'***

When God says, *if only they had been pleased what Allah and His Messenger gave them*, this indicates that they were given something but that they were not satisfied with this. Therefore, it means 'if only they had been pleased to take what God and His Messenger gave them.' The phrase *Allah is sufficient for us* means, 'God will suffice us in that which we desire and that to which we attach our hopes.'

...Allah will give to us out of His grace, and His Messenger: This phrase explains what it is they desire, it is not a prediction of what will happen in the future.

In other words, this verse means that it was hoped that they would take what God and His Messenger gave them from the amassed charities or other sources and that they would say: 'God will suffice us and make it so we have no need of any other means, and we are seeking His grace, and we desire that He grant us a share of His grace and that His Messenger will grant us as well.'

This verse contains a subtle message, in that it attributes the acts of giving to God and the Messenger, but restricts sufficiency (*kifāya*), grace, and desire to God alone, as is the logical corollary of the religion of monotheism.

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَالْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَارِمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ۖ فَرِيضَةً مِنَ اللَّهِ ۗ

وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

(9:60) ***Charities are only for the poor and the needy, and those employed to collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and on slaves and debtors, and in the way of Allah, and on the traveller. An ordinance from Allah, and Allah is all-knowing, all-wise.***

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This verse explains the causes on which obligatory charities can be spent. We know these refer the obligatory charities because the verse ends with the phrase '*an ordinance from Allah*.' There are eight such causes. Also, it is important to note that based on the context and apparent meaning of the verse, the poor (*faqīr*) and the needy (*miskīn*) are two separate classes, and one is not the same as the other.

Commentators and scholars have debated over whether the poor and the needy are one and the same group of people or whether they are, in fact, two separate groups. Then, if it is the latter, there are many diverging opinions on what the difference is between one who is poor and one who is needy. However, most of these opinions do not rest on any clear evidence. What the apparent meaning of the terms themselves suggests is that the poor person (*faqīr*) is someone who lives in a state of lack and deprivation and is unable to meet the needs of his own existence with his own property. This is the opposite of someone who is rich (*ghanī*), who has access to wealth and a comfortable standard of living as a result.

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By contrast, the needy person (*miskīn*) is someone who is not only unable to meet the needs of his own existence, but also lives a pitiable life, to the extent that he is embarrassed by his condition. For example, someone who is forced to sell the sweat of his brow or begs for a living because of his extreme poverty, such as someone who is blind or lame. Therefore, the needy person is in a worse condition than the poor one.

Now, the categories of poor and needy can be seen as having a relationship of a more general category or a more particular one, as every needy person is poor by virtue of his lack of wealth. However, the opposite is not true, as not every poor person is also needy. In everyday language, the poor and the needy are seen as two opposite classes of people because being poor is not the same as being needy. One cannot criticise the Qur'an for drawing a distinction between them or argue that it was enough to mention 'the poor' without mentioning 'the needy' as well because someone who is needy is also in a more abject state

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than someone who is poor. For example, because he is either lame or blind. This is true even if the state of humiliation the needy person suffers ultimately goes back to a lack of wealth.

As for *those employed to collect them*, this means those who work to collect charities and distribute them on behalf of the government.

Those whose hearts are to be reconciled refers to those who can be won over by giving them a share of charities to induce them to submit, to fight against the enemies of Islam, or to seek their aid in looking after the needs of the faith.

...*and on slaves* does not mean giving charity to slaves but to spending it in order to buy their freedom, as is the case with those slaves that have a written agreement to purchase their own freedom (*makātib*) but who do not have the means to pay their master what he has demanded in exchange for their freedom. Alternatively, this may be spent to purchase the freedom of a slave who is in a difficult situation.

...*and debtors*—to be spent on debtors, meaning that a share of charity can be spent on those who have amassed debts in order to pay off their liabilities.

...*and in the way of Allah*—meaning to be spent in the way of God, this is a broad category that covers any act whose benefit returns to Islam and the Muslims or serves the interests of the religion. The most obvious example of such a cause is striving in the way of God, but this also extends to any activity whose benefits extend to all, such as repairing roads and building aqueducts and the like thereof.

...*and the traveller*—in this case, 'the traveller' (*ibn al-sabīl*) refers to someone who is far from home and lacks the means to sustain himself on his journey, even if he is a wealthy person with a comfortable life in his homeland. Therefore, a share of charities can be spent on his needs.

There is a subtle difference in the way in which the Qur'an enumerates these categories in Arabic. Each of the first four are introduced by the preposition *li* ('for')— *for the poor and the needy, and those employed to collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled*—while the second four are not—*and on slaves and debtors, and in the way of Allah, and the traveller*. From the context, it appears that in the latter case, the four are all introduced by the meaning of the preposition *fī* ('on', lit. 'in'), so *<u>on</u> slaves and debtors*, *<u>in</u> the way of Allah*, and *<u>on</u> the traveller*.

As regards the first four—*for the poor and the needy, and those employed to collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled*—the preposition *li* is used to convey ownership (*mulk*), in the sense of having the sole right to dispose of property. Therefore, this part of the verse should be read as an

answer to those hypocrites who coveted a share of charities to which they were not entitled and reproached the Prophet for denying this to them. This verse responds by saying that these are the proper causes on which such charities should be spent and no others, but the apparent meaning of the verse does not go beyond this extent of restriction.

As for these charities being the 'property' of these groups, is this in the legal sense of the term? Equally, are the 'owners' of this property social classes rather than individuals? Furthermore, what is the share of each class of person relative to that of other classes? These questions are, in truth, questions of law that are beyond the scope of our current investigation. What is more, jurists have disagreed vehemently over the answers to these questions, so we direct interested readers to works of jurisprudence for more information.

As for the latter four causes mentioned by the verse—*and on slaves and debtors, and in the way of Allah, and the traveller*—a number of interpretations have been offered for the change in tone compared to the first four causes (namely the switch in prepositions from *li* to *fī*).

One view is that these causes have been arranged in order of priority and worthiness. Therefore, the most deserving recipients of charity are the poor, then the needy, and so on and so forth. Therefore, the latter four causes are arranged in order of descending importance, each with its own particular level of priority. Were it not God's intention to convey the relative priority of these causes in this way, He would have arranged the list by mentioning classes of people first, followed by general causes, namely: The poor, the needy, those employed to collect them, those whose hearts are to be reconciled, debtors, and travellers, then slaves and, finally, in the way of God.

However, this arrangement should be understood in terms of priority rather than delivery, namely that the first item on the list is of the highest priority because it represents the most beneficial expenditure of charitable funds, and there is no doubt in this. One could not argue that this is the order in which the funds are to be disbursed to their recipients, as there is nothing in the wording of the verse to suggest this meaning, nor is there any sense behind such a stipulation.

Another view is that the switch from *li* to *fī* in the last four items on the list is to show that these four causes are, in fact, the worthiest recipients of charity, as *fī* (lit. 'in') signifies that one thing is contained within another. Therefore, these last four causes must be the most important causes because the verse is worded in such a way that charities are placed 'in' them, indicating that they are the proper place for such charities. This is because freeing slaves includes

both slaves with contracts of manumission, slaves without such contracts, and prisoners of war, while giving charity to debtors means releasing them from the bonds of debt. Equally, spending in the way of God means spending on those who are poor and striving in the way of God or poor and making the Hajj pilgrimage. In both cases, this combines the alleviation of poverty with the worship of God. Finally, spending on the traveller combines the alleviation of poverty with helping someone who is far from his people and property.

The repetition of the preposition *fī* in *in the way of Allah, and the traveller* highlights the priority of these two categories over *slaves and debtors*. This is what al-Zamakhsharī argues in *al-Kashshāf*.

However, the problem with this reading is that it comes into conflict with the fact that the first four categories are introduced by the preposition *li*, which signifies ownership, as the connection of an owner to their rightful property is much stronger than the connection of a vessel to what it contains, as is obvious.

Still another view is that the preposition *li* is used for the first four categories because when charity is spent on them, they become its owners. Therefore, the use of the preposition *li* in this case is apt. By contrast, the latter four categories do not become the owners of the charity spent on them, rather the charity is given to others for their benefit.

For example, the charity that is spent on slaves is received by the masters with whom they have a manumission agreement or on those selling them. Therefore, none of the charity spent reaches the hands of the slaves themselves such that it could be considered their property, hence the preposition *li* is not used. Instead, they are the beneficiary for whom these funds are spent. The same is true for debtors, for their share of charity goes to their creditors to release them from their liabilities. As for charity spent in the way of God, this is self-evident. Meanwhile, it seems that the traveller is included within the category of '*in the way of Allah*'[1] but he has been singled out for mention to call attention to his special status, without either of the prepositions *li* or *fī* being placed in front of him. Therefore, it is possible to read the phrase '*and the traveller*' as being linked to the earlier instance of the preposition *li*, even though it makes more sense to link it to the nearest preposition, namely *fī*.

This is a sound reading of the verse, except for its treatment of the phrase

1 In fact, like the slave and the debtor, the charity is spent for the traveller's welfare but not given directly to him. In this case, it is spent on a mount and provisions to convey him to his homeland. (Trans.)

'*and the traveller*', which is somewhat overwrought, and the argument that it is included within the broader category of '*in the way of Allah*' is something it shares with other categories mentioned in the verse.

Likewise, if one were to argue that debtors and the travellers were both linked to the preposition *li* and pointed to the first interpretation of the verse above, namely that these categories are listed in order of priority, and then to point to the last interpretation to explain why '*slaves*' and '*the way of Allah*' take the preposition *fī*, this would also not be far off the mark.

The closing line of the verse, *an ordinance from Allah, and Allah is all-knowing, all-wise*, shows that God has made charity (*zakāt*) an obligatory religious duty on the basis of His infinite knowledge and wisdom, and that, therefore, this duty admits no change or alteration by anyone. It is not unlikely that this ordinance pertains to the division of the charities between the eight causes listed in the verse. This is perhaps supported by the context of the verse, which relates to explaining the spending of charities rather than the original obligation of paying charity. Therefore, the most appropriate reading of the verse is that *an ordinance from Allah* refers to the division of charities between the eight aforementioned categories, indicating that this division is something divinely enjoined by God and that charitable funds cannot be spent on anything else, contrary to the wishes of the hypocrites who were reproaching the Prophet.

Hence, it appears that the verse is, in part, concerned with the fact that the division of charities between these eight categories is not something specific to a particular time, contrary to those who claim that *those whose hearts are to be reconciled* referred to a group of nobles at the time of the Prophet whose hearts he reconciled to Islam through giving then a share of the charities, but that after him Islam had triumphed and there was no need to reconcile people's hearts to the religion anymore. However, this is an erroneous reading, as this need did not disappear at all.

وَمِنْهُمُ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ النَّبِيَّ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ أُذُنٌ ۚ قُلْ أُذُنُ خَيْرٍ لَكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ
بِاللَّهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ
رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٦١﴾

(9:61) ***Among them are those who torment the Prophet, and say, 'He is an ear.' Say, 'An ear of what is good for you. He has faith in Allah and has faith towards the faithful, and is a mercy for those***

of you who have faith.' As for those who torment the Messenger of Allah, there is a painful punishment for them.

The hypocrites refer to the Prophet as an 'ear' (*udhun*) because he would listen to all that is said to him, and someone who listens to everything they are told is called an 'ear.'

Therefore, when God says, *Say, 'An ear of what is good for you'* (in which case, this is a genuine possessive construct), this means that the Prophet is a listener who hears that which is good and beneficial for you. He hears God's revelation, which contains good for you. And he listens to the advice of the faithful, which is good for you. This could also be read as '*an ear that is good for you*' (in which case this is an adjectival possessive construct), in the sense that he only hears what benefits you and does not listen to that which might harm you.

The difference between these two readings is as follows: In the first, the thing that is heard is good for them, such as divine revelation from God or the advice of the faithful; in the second, the act of listening is what is good, even if the thing being heard is not. For example, there might be some speech that does not contain any good, but he listens to it anyway and, in doing so, shows respect to the speaker. Then, he will interpret what was said to him in the best possible way so as not to embarrass the speaker or assume the worst about him. Finally, he will not act upon this speech as though it were an accurate account of reality and, in doing so, the speaker will not suffer any consequences or blame for what he has said. In adopting this approach, the Prophet will have shown respect for his faithfulness in the same manner as he shows respect for the faithfulness of someone who brings him a true report.

Based on this, it appears that the most appropriate reading of the verse, based on its context, is the second of the two, as God follows this with, *He has faith in Allah and has faith towards the faithful*.

The word '*faith*' (*īmān*) here means to believe someone to be truthful. The phrase *He has faith in Allah* (billāh) explicitly mentions the object of his faith, whereas *has faith towards the faithful* (lil-mu'minīn) does not explicitly mention the object of his faith. Instead, it says that he has faith for the benefit of the faithful, as shown by the use of the preposition *li*. The faith that is for the benefit of the faithful, even in the case of reports containing things that might be harmful to them, is faith in the sense of treating the person who brings the report as truthful without necessarily trusting the report itself, meaning to trust that they believe that this report is truthful, even if the

report itself is not.

This is akin to the verse in which God says, *When the hypocrites come to you they say, 'We bear witness that you are indeed the messenger of Allah.' Allah knows that you are indeed His Messenger, and Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are indeed liars* (63:1). In this verse, God explicitly denounces the hypocrites as liars, not because their statement that the Prophet is the messenger of God is false in of itself, but because this statement is contrary to their own beliefs. Compare this to the statement of the believers, as related by God in a different verse, *but when the faithful saw the confederates, they said, 'This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us, and Allah and His Messenger were true'* (33:22). In other words, they proclaim God and the Messenger as truthful in what they foretold, not in what they believed.

In short, the apparent meaning of the phrase, *He has faith in Allah and has faith towards the faithful*, is that the Prophet has faith in the truthfulness of the revelation God sends down to him. And he has faith in whatever the believers report to him for their benefit in the sense that he assumes that they believe what they are saying, so he does not accuse them of lying or assume ill intent on their part, without necessarily acting on everything he hears from them. If he were to act on everything they told him, this faith would not, in fact, be to the benefit of the faithful at all and the affairs of the Muslims would be thrown into disorder. As you can see, this interpretation of this phrase supports the second interpretation of the phrase, *an ear of what is good for you* (i.e. *an ear <u>that is</u> good for you*).

It also appears that the meaning of '*the faithful*' here is the community to which they belong, even if this community contains others who are not truly faithful, such as the hypocrites. If this is the case, the phrase '*those who have faith*' denotes those who are truly faithful in the community of '*the faithful*.' Therefore, the meaning of this part of the verse is that the Prophet believes his Lord and he believes in every member of the community out of respect for his outward claim to be faithful. This is a mercy for those who truly believe, because in this way he guides them to the straight path.

Now, if what was meant by '*those who have faith*' are those who believed in him from the beginning of his mission before his victory then, as we have previously mentioned, the phrase '*those who have faith*' is an honorific the Qur'an applies to the earliest believers in Islam. In this case, the meaning of '*the faithful*' in the phrase, *He has faith in Allah and has faith towards the faithful*, would be those who truly believe in him, in the same sense as this term is used in the verse quoted above, *but when the faithful saw the confederates,*

they said, 'This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us...' (33:22).

Some commentators have argued that the preposition *li* in *has faith towards the faithful* (lil-mu'minīn) is only to make the verb 'to have faith' (*yu'min*) transitive and does not convey a different meaning to the preposition *bi*, as used in *He has faith in Allah* (bi-llāh), as the object of the verb *yu'min* can take either the preposition *bi* or *li*. For example, see the verses: *Thereupon Lot believed in him* (āmana lahu) (29:26); *But none believed in Moses* (āmana li Mūsā) *except some youths from among his people* (10:83); *Shall we believe in you* (nu'min laka)*, when it is the riffraff who follow you?* (26:111).

Others have argued that the use of the preposition *li* augments the meaning of *yu'min* ('to have faith') with the additional meaning 'to incline towards.' In other words, the Messenger has faith in God and inclines towards the faithful, believing in them, or he believes in them while inclining towards them.

While there is nothing problematic with either of these interpretations in and of themselves, the distinction between the two instances of the verb 'has faith' (*yu'min*) in the passage under discussion—*He has faith in Allah and has faith towards the faithful*—makes them unlikely, unless this is to be understood as a purely stylistic convention. However, even if we treat these interpretations as plausible, the conclusion we draw remains the same, namely that the Prophet's belief in the faithful does not mean that he must believe the content of whatever they tell him, only that he believes that they believe that what they are telling him is truthful, whether he acts on it or not.

When God says, *and is a mercy for those of you who have faith*, He is counting His Prophet as a mercy for a specific group of people in this verse. However, elsewhere, He has said that he is a mercy for all humankind: *We did not send you but as a mercy to all the nations* (21:107). However, these verses are referring to two different kinds of mercy (*raḥma*). The present verse is referring to actualized mercy, while the latter is referring to potential mercy.

In other words, the Prophet is a mercy for those who truly believe in him in the sense that God has saved them from error and guaranteed them a happy and noble fate. At the same time, he is a mercy for all humankind, whether or not they believe in him, both those who are alive at his time and those who will come after him. This is because God sent him with a pure religion and a wholesome way of life in order to transform human society and prevent it from deviating from the path of rectitude and onto the path of misery and perdition. At the same time, He made him a shining beacon to light the straight path of Man's God-given nature (*fiṭra*). There are those who have already set out on this path and will reach their intended destination, while there are others

who have left behind the path of misery but not yet begun their journey on the path of human nature, and there are still others who wish to leave behind the road to perdition but have not yet done so. This is the state of all human society following the advent of Islam and the spread of its teachings across. Virtually everyone has heard of it, and it has influenced countless cultures and traditions. This is something no one who studies the nature of human society can deny. An astute reader will have already noticed that this aspect of the divine mercy embodied in the Prophet is very close to the one invoked in this verse or, in fact, derived from its essence.

يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ لِيُرْضُوكُمْ وَاللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُرْضُوهُ إِنْ كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾

(9:62) ***They swear to you by Allah, to please you; but Allah and His Messenger are worthier* (aḥaqq) *that they should please Him, should they be faithful.***

In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, we read: 'The difference between *aḥaqq* and *aṣlaḥ* [both of which can be translated as 'worthier'] is that *aḥaqq* can pertain to qualities not bound up with human actions. For example, one might say, "Zayd is worthier (*aḥaqq*) of this property." However, one cannot use the term *aṣlaḥ* in this context. Therefore we can say that God is *aḥaqq* ("worthier") of obedience, but we cannot say He is *aṣlaḥ* of it.'

The reason for this distinction between *aṣlaḥ* and *aḥaqq* is that the former conveys a sense of potentiality or receptivity, while the latter conveys a sense of actuality and necessity, and no form of potentiality or receptivity can ever be attributed to God Almighty, as this would imply that He was acted upon by another being, which is impossible, as He is purely active and never passive.

Notice that in this verse God has shifted from speaking directly to His Prophet to address the faithful, as if to subtly call their attention to the principle expressed in the phrase, *but Allah and His Messenger are worthier that they should please Him, should they be faithful*, namely that every true believer should be pleased with God and His Messenger, and they should never oppose God and His Messenger, for that will only bring down a great disgrace and the everlasting torment of Hell upon them.

This verse also calls attention to an etiquette of monotheism, namely, *are worthier that they should please Him*. See how the verse uses the singular pronoun *Him* instead of the dual pronoun 'them both' (*humā*). This is out

of respect for God's exalted station, which He shares with no one. After all, even if there are things that can be said of both God and other beings simultaneously, whatever rights or qualities He possesses are His innately and by virtue of His essence, and whatever rights or qualities other beings possess are extraneous or accidental to them. For example, the obligation to please, venerate, and obey others, or the qualities of knowledge and life, and the power to give life and death, and so on.

This etiquette of monotheism can be observed in numerous places throughout the Qur'an where the Prophet shares some status with other members of his nation, but God sets the Prophet apart from them and singles him out for mention. For example: *...the day when Allah will not let the Prophet down and the faithful who are with him* (66:8); *Allah sent down His composure upon His Apostle and upon the faithful* (48:26); *The Apostle has faith in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and all the faithful* (2:285).

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُ مَنْ يُحَادِدِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَأَنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الْخِزْيُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٦٣﴾

(9:63) *Do they not know that whoever opposes* (yuḥādid) *Allah and His Apostle, there awaits him the Fire of hell, to remain therein forever? That is the great disgrace* (khizyu).

In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, we read: 'To oppose (*muḥadda*) means to transgress the bounds with effort, and it is synonymous with *mukhālafa* (to oppose), *mujānaba* (to take the opposite side), *muʿādāt* (to be hostile), and the like thereof. Its original meaning is "to prevent or detain," and *muḥadda* can also refer to the impetuousness that can sometimes seize a person and cause them to lose their good sense, as this prevents them from doing what is right... *khizyu* signifies lowliness and humiliation.'

The question in this verse is rhetorical and intended to convey amazement and to indicate that God and His Messenger are more worthy of people trying to please them.

In short, the meaning of the verse is that people know very well that opposing God and His Messenger and enmity towards them and angering them will only lead them to be consigned to Hell eternally. If it is forbidden to anger God and His Messenger then, by extension, it is obligatory for whoever believes in God and His Messenger to please God and please the Messenger.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is narrated from Abū al-Jārūd, from Imām al-Bāqir, concerning the verse, *If some good should befall you, it upsets them; but if an adversity befalls you...* (9:50): 'As for "*good*", this refers to spoils and comfort, as for "*adversity*", this refers to tribulation and hardship.'

(2) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is narrated from Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Jābir b. 'Abd Allāh: 'The hypocrites who had stayed behind in Medina began spreading ill rumors about the Prophet, saying things like: "Muḥammad and his companions suffered so greatly on their journey that they perished." Then news came to the city that contradicted their claims, saying that the Prophet and his companions were safe. This displeased them greatly, so God sent down the verse, *If some good should befall you, it upsets them* (9:50).'

(3) In *al-Kāfī*, it is narrated from Abū Ḥamza, that he asked Imām al-Bāqir about the verse, *Do you await anything to befall us except one of the two excellences?* (9:52), he explained: 'Either dying while obeying the Imām or being present for the reappearance of the Imām. *But*, even though we are in great hardship, *we await that Allah shall visit on you a punishment, from Him*—transformation—*or by our hands*—being slain. God says, *So wait! We too are waiting along with you.*'

Author's comments: This is extending the verse to a new context (*jarī*) rather than an explanation of its meaning (*tafsīr*).

(4) In *al-Maḥāsin*, it is narrated from Yūsuf b. Thābit from Imām al-Ṣādiq: 'No action is harmful so long as there is faith, and no action is beneficial so long as there is faithlessness.' Then he said: 'Do you not see that God says, *Nothing stops their charities from being accepted except that they have no faith in Allah and His Messenger*?'

Author's comments: al-Qummī and al-'Ayyāshī both narrate this from him, as does al-Kulaynī in *al-Kāfī*, in a detailed tradition.

This narration's meaning is further clarified by other verses and narrations; so long as a person has faith, no sin will cause them to remain in hell forever, and so long as a person has no faith, then no good deed will avail them.

(5) In *Majma' al-Bayān*, concerning the verse '*...or a whole...*' (9:57), he says: 'a burrow (*sarab*).' This is narrated from Imām al-Bāqir.

(6) In *al-Kāfī*, it is narrated from Isḥāq b. Ghālib that Imām al-Ṣādiq told him: 'O Isḥāq! How many people do you think this verse applies to?

...if they are given from them, they are pleased, but if they are not given from them, behold, they are displeased (9:58).' The Imām answered his own question: 'More than one-third of people!'

Author's comments: This is narrated by al-'Ayyāshī in his *Tafsīr* and by al-Ḥusayn b. Sa'īd in *Kitāb al-zuhd*, from Isḥāq, from the Imām.

(7) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is narrated from al-Bukhārī, al-Nasā'ī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātam, Abū al-Shaykh, and Ibn Mardawayh, from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī:

When the Prophet was dividing charities, Dhū al-Khuayṣira al-Tamīmī came to him and said: 'Be fair, O Messenger of God!'

He answered: 'Woe to you! And who shall be fair if not me?'

'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb said: 'O Messenger of God, allow me to strike his neck!'

The Messenger of God said: 'Leave him be, for he has companions whose prayer and fasting would make you think little of your own, but they shall go out of the religion as an arrow passes through game, whereupon the archer would examine the arrowhead but see nothing, and look at the arrow feathers but see nothing, and look at its shaft but see nothing, for it has passed through too quickly for any blood to stain it. The sign by which they will be recognized is a man whose breast—or breasts—will resemble that of a woman or a lump of flesh moving loosely. They will emerge when there are differences amongst the people.' Then the verse was revealed: *There are some of them who blame you regarding charities* (9:58).

Abū Sa'īd added: 'I testify that I heard the Messenger of God utter these words and I testify that when 'Alī slew them—and I was with him—the man described by the Prophet was found amongst the dead exactly as he had described him.'

(8) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī* about the same verse, we read: 'It was revealed when the charities were gathered and the wealthy people came thinking that the Messenger would divide these amongst them as well. Then, when the Messenger of God gave them to the poor, they began to complain to the Messenger of God and reproach him. They said: "We are the ones who fight and raid with him and support his cause, but he gives these charities to those who neither assist him nor avail him in any way!" So, God revealed the verse, *If only they had been pleased with what Allah and His Messenger gave them, and had said, "Allah is sufficient for us; Allah will give to us out of His grace, and His*

Messenger. Indeed to Allah do we eagerly turn" (9:59).

'Then God explained to whom these charities should be delivered, saying, *Charities are only for the poor and the needy, and those employed to collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and on slaves and debtors, and in the way of Allah, and the traveller. An ordinance from Allah, and Allah is all-knowing, all-wise.*

'In doing so, God excluded all people from receiving charities save for the eight groups whom he mentioned by name.

'Then Imām al-Ṣādiq explained who these groups are. He said: "The poor are those who do not beg but who have dependents to support, and the evidence that they do not beg is God's saying in Sūrah al-Baqarah, that charities are *for the poor who are straitened in the way of Allah, not capable of moving about in the land. The unaware suppose them to be well-off because of their reserve. You recognise them by their mark; they do not ask the people importunately* (2:273).

'"The needy are those who suffer from chronic illnesses, such as the blind, the lame, the leper, and any man, woman, or child, who suffers from a condition such as this.

'"Those employed to collect them are those who work to take, gather, and safeguard these charities until they are delivered to the one who divides them.

'"Those whose hearts are to be reconciled are those people who believe in God's monotheism but whose hearts have not yet accepted the knowledge that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, so the Messenger would reconcile them and educate them so that they would learn, and God assigned for them a share of the charities so that they would learn and incline to Islam."'

Author's comments: This interpretation—which is presented without a complete chain of narrators—is supported by numerous other narrations with complete chains that have been transmitted from the Prophet's Household. There are some discrepancies between these narrations, but, given their abundance, interested readers can refer to the collections of traditions and works of jurisprudence for a more detailed treatment of this subject.

(9) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Bukhārī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Ibn Mardawayh narrated from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī: 'When ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was in Yemen, he sent the Prophet some gold that was still mixed with its earth. He divided it between four whose hearts were to be reconciled to Islam: al-Aqraʿ b. Ḥābis al-Hanẓalī, ʿAlqama b.

ʿUlātha al-ʿĀmirī, ʿUyayna b. Badr al-Fazārī, and Zayd al-Khayl al-Ṭāʾī. The Quraysh and the Helpers objected: "Will you share this with the chiefs of the people of Najd and forget about us?" The Prophet said: "I merely wish to reconcile their hearts to Islam."'

(10) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Ibn Mardawayh narrate from Yaḥyā b. Abī Kathīr: 'Those whose hearts were to be reconciled to Islam were Abū Sufyān b. al-Ḥārith b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib of the Banū Hāshim, Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb of the Banū Umayya, al-Ḥārith b. Hishām and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Yarbūʿ of the Banū Makhzūm, Ḥakīm b. Hizām of the Banū Asad, Suhayl b. ʿAmr and Ḥuwayṭib b. ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā of the Banū ʿĀmir, Ṣafwān b. Umayya from the Banū Jumah, ʿUdayy b. Qays from the Banū Sahm, al-ʿAlāʾ b. Jāriya (or Hāritha) from Thaqīf, ʿUyana b. Ḥiṣn from the Banū Fazāra, al-Aqraʿ b. Ḥābis from the Banū Tamīm, Mālik b. ʿAwf from the Banū Naṣr, and al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās from the Banū Salīm.

'The Prophet gave each of these men one hundred she-camels, except for ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Yarbūʿ and Ḥuwayṭib b. ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā, to each of whom he gave fifty.'

(11) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, Abū al-Jārūd narrates from Imām al-Bāqir: 'Those whose hearts are to be reconciled to Islam were Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb b. Umayya, Suhayl b. Amr from the Banū ʿĀmir b. Luʾayy, his brother Hishām b. ʿAmr, the brother of the Banū ʿĀmir b. Luʾayy, Ṣafwān b. Umayya b. Khalf al-Qurashī al-Jumaḥī, al-Aqraʿ b. Ḥābis al-Tamīmī of the Banū Hāzim, ʿUyayna b. Ḥiṣn al-Fazārī, Mālik b. ʿAwf, and ʿAlqama b. ʿUlātha.

'A report has reached me that the Messenger of God would give each of them one hundred camels and their pasture, or thereabouts.'

Author's comments: These are those whose hearts were to be reconciled to Islam to whom the Prophet gave charities for that purpose. These traditions do not mean to limit those whose hearts are to be reconciled to Islam—one of the eight categories for which charities can be spent mentioned in the verse—to these individual persons named herein.

(12) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Ibn Isḥāq, from some of his associates, that Imām al-Ṣādiq was asked about those slaves who had contracts of manumission (*makātib*) but who were unable to pay the amount in full, having only managed part. He said: 'The remainder should be paid out of charitable funds, surely God says in His Book,

and on slaves (9:60).'

In the same source, it is narrated from Zurāra: 'I said to Imām al-Ṣādiq: "A slave who fornicates?"

'He said: "He is lashed with half the number of lashes stipulated for the free person."

'I said: "And if he repeats his offence?"

'He said: "He is lashed the same again."

'I said: "And if he repeats it again?"

'He said: "He is never punished with more than half of the prescribed punishment."

'I said: "Should he ever be stoned as a punishment for what he does?" He said: "Yes, he is put to death on the eighth offence, if he does this eight times."

'I said: "So what is the difference between him and the free person when their action is one and the same?"

'He said: "Surely God is too merciful to make him suffer the fetters of the slave and the punishment of the free at the same time!" He added: "The leader of the Muslims must purchase his freedom from his owner on the eighth offence."'

(13) In the same source, it is narrated from al-Ṣabāḥ b. Sayāba: 'Whenever a Muslim dies and leaves behind a debt that he has not spent on immorality or extravagance, the leader of the Muslims should discharge it for him. If he does not, he bears the sin of it. Surely God says, *Charities are only for the poor and the needy, and those employed to collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and on slaves and debtors...* and the deceased is a debtor who has a share of the charities that are at the leader's disposal. Therefore, if the leader withholds this share from him, he is sinful.'

(14) In the same source, Muḥammad b. al-Qasrī narrates from Imām al-Ṣādiq: 'I asked him about charities. He said: "Divide them amongst those whom God has identified, but do not give from the share assigned to debtors to those who have incurred debts in order to pay dowries for wives, nor to those who proclaim the call of pre-Islamic ignorance." I asked him: "What is the call of pre-Islamic ignorance?" He said: "A man who participates in tribal bloodshed and must pay a blood debt, this is not paid out of the share allotted to debtors, nor to those who are careless with the property of others."'

In the same source, it is narrated from al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad: 'I

said to Imām al-Ṣādiq: "A man gave me money to spend in the way of God." He said: "Spend it on the Hajj pilgrimage." I said: "But he said I should spend it in the way of God!" He said: "Then spend it on the Hajj pilgrimage, for I know of no better way of God than the Hajj."'

Author's comments: There are too many narrations to count on this topic, and those we have presented here are merely a sample.

(15) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, about the verse, *Among them are those who torment the Prophet...* (9:61), it is narrated by Ibn Isḥāq, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Ibn ʿAbbās: 'Nabtal b. al-Ḥārith would come to the Messenger of God, sit with him and listen to him, then relate what he said to the hypocrites. He would tell them: "Muḥammad is naught but an ear. He believes everything he is told!" So God sent down the verse, *Among them are those who torment the Prophet, and say, "He is an ear."*'

(16) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, the occasion of revelation for the same verse is given as follows: 'Abd Allāh b. Nabtal was a hypocrite who would come and sit with the Messenger of God, listen to his discussions, then relate what he heard to the hypocrites and revile him. The Angel Gabriel came down to the Messenger of God and said: 'O Muḥammad, there is a man of the hypocrites who reviles you and relates your conversations to the hypocrites.' The Messenger of God said: 'Who is he?'

He said: 'A man with a dark countenance with much hair on his head whose eyes resemble two cooking pots when he looks through them and who speaks with the tongue of the devil.'

The Messenger of God summoned him and informed him of this, but he swore it was not true. So, the Messenger of God said: 'I accept your oath, so do not do it.' Then 'Abd Allāh returned to his companions and said: 'Muḥammad is naught but an ear. God told him that I was reviling him and reporting on him and he believed it, then I told him that I did not do any such thing, and he believed it!'

Whereat God sent down the following verse to His Prophet, *Among them are those who torment the Prophet, and say, 'He is an ear.' Say, 'An ear of what is good for you. He has faith in Allah and has faith towards the faithful...'* meaning that he believes what God tells him and he accepts your excuses even if he does not believe them in his heart. *And has faith towards the faithful* refers to those who profess faith, even if they do not truly believe.

Author's comments: A similar report has been transmitted in *Nahj al-bayān* from Imām al-Ṣādiq.

(17) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Abī al-Ḥātim narrates from al-Sudayy: 'A group of hypocrites gathered that included Julās b. Suwayd b. Ṣāmit, Juḥsh b. Ḥamīr, and Wadī'a b. Thābit, and they wanted to impugn the Prophet. However, they forbade one another from doing so and said: "We fear that word will reach Muḥammad and you will face the consequences." One of them said: "Muḥammad is nothing but an ear, we will swear to him that we did no such thing, and he will believe us." Then the verse was revealed, *Among them are those who torment the Prophet, and say, "He is an ear."'*

(18) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, it is narrated from Ḥammād b. Sinān, from Imām al-Ṣādiq: 'I wanted to give some commodities to someone to sell in Yemen. So I went to Imām al-Bāqir and told him: "I want to give some commodities to so-and-so to sell in Yemen." He said to me: "Don't you know that he drinks wine?" I said: "I have heard the believers say as much." He said: "Then believe them, for God Almighty says, *he has faith in Allah and has faith towards the faithful*, meaning that he believes God and he believes what the faithful tell him because he was most-kind and most merciful to the faithful."'

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Verses 64–74

These verses discuss another aspect of the hypocrites' state, reveal yet another one of their evil qualities that they have concealed through their two-facedness, and show that they were afraid that they would be discovered or that a chapter of the Qur'an would be sent down to disclose their scheming.

From the verses, it is evident that the hypocrites under discussion here were a group with a significant number of members, as shown by the verse, *if We forgive a group among you, We will punish another group* (9:66). It also appears that they had some connections and agreements with other groups of hypocrites, as indicated by the verse, *the hypocrites, men and women, are from one another* (9:67). They continued to maintain an outward appearance of submission and faith until the time these verses were revealed and would only disclose their hypocrisy and faithlessness to one another, keeping it secret from everyone else, *You have disbelieved after your faith* (9:66).

It is also evident that the hypocrites were plotting together, as this is where they revealed their faithlessness to one another. They were clearly intending to do something serious, so God intervened to protect the Messenger from them, and their plans came to nothing as a result, as shown by the verse, *But they certainly did utter the word of unfaith and renounced faith after their submission. They contemplated what they could not achieve* (9:74).

It appears that some elements of their plot came to light, as they were questioned about it and offered excuses that were just as bad as whatever they had in mind, as indicated by the verse, *if you question them, they will surely say, 'We were just gossiping and amusing ourselves'* (9:65). The following verse occurs in the same context and reveals that whatever their plan was, it was hatched after the Prophet had set out on the campaign to Tabūk and returned to Medina, as evinced by the verse, *If Allah brings you back to a group of them* (9:83), and the verse, *They will swear to you by Allah, when you return to them* (9:95).

Therefore, in summary, what these verses show is that there were a group of those who went forth with the Prophet who were conspiring to harm him, and it was in the course of their plotting that they secretly uttered words of disbelief after having outwardly embraced Islam. Then they resolved to do what they had agreed upon, such as assassinating him or the like, but God foiled their plans, disgraced them, and exposed them. Then, when they were

asked about their plots, they said: 'We were just gossiping and amusing ourselves.' So God rebuked them through the words of His Messenger that they were deriding God, His signs, and His messenger and threatened them with punishment if they did not repent, then God commanded His Prophet to fight them and to fight those who disbelieved.

As you can see, these verses appear to relate most closely to the account of al-'Aqaba of all the accounts they could apply to that have come down in the various narrations explaining the context in which these verses were revealed. We shall discuss the most important of these in our treatment of the narrations, below.

يَحْذَرُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ أَنْ تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُورَةٌ تُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ۚ قُلِ اسْتَهْزِئُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْرِجٌ مَا تَحْذَرُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

(9:64) ***The hypocrites are apprehensive lest a chapter should be sent down against them, informing them about what is in their hearts. Say, 'Go on deriding. Allah will indeed bring out what you are apprehensive of.'***

The hypocrites saw that most of what they concealed of their hypocrisy, the blasphemous things they whispered to one another, and their derision and mockery, were known to the Messenger and recited to the people in the verses of the Qur'an that the Prophet said were revelations from God. Now, even though they certainly did not believe that these were divine revelations from God brought down to the Messenger of God by the Angel Gabriel; they believed that there were believers spying on them and reporting back to the Prophet about their activities, which he then disclosed in the verses of revelation. What they feared was that their hypocrisy and secret unbelief would be revealed, as the Prophet was the one who had power and authority over them, and he could do with them as he pleased.

Therefore, the hypocrites were fearful that a chapter of the Qur'an would come down and reveal the disbelief they concealed, the plans they made to turn the tide of events against the Prophet, and their goal to thwart his mission and extinguish his message. For this reason, God commanded His Prophet to tell them that God is aware of what their hearts contain and that He would bring to light whatever they were afraid of being exposed by revealing a chapter of the Qur'an about them. In other words, that God would send down a chapter fitting this description.

This explanation renders the meaning of the verse clear. Hence, the passage, *the hypocrites are apprehensive lest a chapter should be sent down against them*, is addressed to the Prophet and the discussion as a whole is directed to him. Now, he already knows, because God Himself has taught him, that what he recites to people is divine speech and the Qur'an has come down from Him. Therefore, God describes the divine speech that the hypocrites are most fearful of in terms of what the Prophet knows—that it is a chapter of the Qur'an that has come down from God about the people, including the hypocrites—not according to what the hypocrites imagine—that it is human speech presented as though it was divine speech.

Therefore, the hypocrites were afraid that the Prophet would recite a discourse about them to the people in the form of a chapter of the Qur'an that laid bare the contents of their hearts and exposed their secrets, their infidelity, and their evil intentions for all to see. This, in reality, is the revelation that they feared would be sent down.

Say, 'Go on deriding. Allah will indeed bring out what you are apprehensive of': It appears that '*deriding*' here is used in reference to their hypocrisy and its effects. God calls their hypocrisy derision because of what He relates from them in the verse, *When they meet the faithful, they say, 'We believe,' but when they are alone with their devils, they say, 'We are with you; we were only deriding*' (2:14). Therefore, what derision refers to here is the fact that they conceal what they are afraid of coming to light. The imperative, '*Go on deriding*' then, is a command that is intended to reveal the incapability of the one to whom it is addressed. In other words, persist in your hypocrisy and continue to conceal the things about you that you are afraid of having exposed to people's eyes and ears. Surely God will bring all of that forth and draw back the veil on your secrets. He will make apparent what you have secreted in your hearts.

Hence, while the opening of the verse says that they are fearful of a chapter of the Qur'an being revealed about them, what they were really afraid of was that the Prophet was aware of their activities and that these would be made known to the people. This is what the end of the verse says they are fearful of. Therefore, it is as though the verse is saying: 'The hypocrites are afraid of a chapter of the Qur'an being sent down, so tell them that God will surely send it down.' Or, it is saying: 'The hypocrites are afraid that their true nature will be exposed and the contents of their hearts will be made plain to see, so tell them that they should go on deriding, for God will surely expose that and inform people what is really in their hearts.'

The above explanation addresses a number of problems that have been

posed about the verse. The first of these is that the hypocrites do not believe in the Prophet or his message and that, therefore, they do not really believe that the Qur'an has come down from God, so how can they be afraid of a chapter of it being revealed against them?

The second is that they are not truly believers, so how can God say he will send a chapter of the Qur'an down 'upon' them (as the verse uses the preposition *'alā*, literally meaning 'on' but translated here as 'against') when the revelation is only sent down 'upon' the Prophet or the faithful?

The third is that they are afraid of a chapter of the Qur'an being revealed about them, and this is really an internal emotional state, so how can the verse refer to this as 'derision'?

The fourth and final is that the beginning of the verse says that they are afraid of a chapter of the Qur'an being sent down, but the end of the verse says that God will bring forth what they are fearful of. Therefore, does this not mean that God will bring forth a chapter of the Qur'an, or He will bring forth the sending down of a chapter?

Now, some commentators respond to the first objection by saying that the phrase, *the hypocrites are apprehensive* is actually intended to mean 'let the hypocrites be apprehensive lest a chapter should be sent down against them....'

However, it should be clear that this is a weak answer, both because there is no evidence for this reading and that it conflicts with the end of the verse, as it becomes meaningless to say, 'Let the hypocrites be apprehensive of such-and-such. *Say, "Go on deriding. Allah will indeed bring out what you are apprehensive of"*—meaning what you should be apprehensive of.'

Some have argued that the hypocrites were only putting on a show of apprehension mockingly and not in earnest. However, this would mean that they were confident that the disbelief they harboured in their hearts and their sinfulness that they kept hidden would never be brought to light, and that no one could possibly discover it. This is explicitly refuted by the numerous verses of the Qur'an that disclose the disbelief and sinfulness they had set their hearts upon and the schemes and plots they had secretly made between themselves—see, for example, the verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah, Sūrah al-Munāfiqīn and others. Moreover, they had already directly witnessed their secrets being disclosed time and again, so there is no way that they could have believed that they would never be discovered, such that they could put on a mocking show of apprehension. After all, God has said elsewhere that *they suppose every cry is directed against them* (63:4).

Others have argued that most of the hypocrites were actually in doubt

about the truthfulness of the Prophet's mission without necessarily denying it outright. Therefore, they knew rationally that it was possible a chapter of the revelation could be sent down to reveal the contents of their hearts. Therefore, the anxiety and concern they display is a natural consequence of their doubt and hesitancy about the Prophet and his claims. If they were certain that the Messenger's claims were false, they would not have feared such a revelation. Equally, if they were certain that his claims were truthful, there would have been no reason for them to be afraid or apprehensive, because their hearts would have had the assurance of faith.

This is the response that the majority of commentators on the Qur'an have favoured, and while on the surface it appears to be a valid reading of the verse, it nevertheless faces some problems. These commentators have read the verse as meaning that the hypocrites are fearful lest a chapter of the revelation be revealed against them, because fear—they say—is an appropriate response to being in doubt about something, as opposed to having certainty.

However, the verse does not use the word 'fear' (*khawf*) to describe their state but 'apprehension' (*ḥadhar*), saying they are apprehensive that a chapter be revealed against them. Now, the word *ḥadhar* also conveys a sense of being on guard or protecting oneself against something. This means that the person who is apprehensive will take measures to ward off the thing he is apprehensive of and to protect himself from the harm he anticipates from it.

Now, if what the hypocrites were experiencing was merely doubt, without having seen first-hand the real-world effects of what they were afraid of, then it would not make sense for them to take precautions against it. Therefore, the fact that the hypocrites are described as 'apprehensive' rather than merely 'fearful' shows that they have already had experience of something similar, such as the verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah and other chapters. And it is the idea of this experience being repeated that gives rise to their anxiety and apprehension, rather than mere doubt or hesitation. Therefore, our preferred explanation is what we have already said.

As regards the second objection to the verse, which concerns the use of the preposition *'alā* (lit. 'upon' but translated here as 'against') in *lest a chapter should be sent down against them*, some commentators respond that it is used in the same meaning here as it is in the verse, *and they followed what the devils recited about* ('alā) *Solomon's reign*, namely in the sense of 'about.' Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'The hypocrites are apprehensive lest a chapter should be sent down about their state and revealing their true inner condition for all to see.' There is no problem with this reading, save for the fact that it

is made redundant by the next phrase, *informing them about what is in their hearts*, as we shall explain shortly.

Other commentators have said that the pronoun in '*against them*' (*'alayhim*) refers to the faithful rather than the hypocrites. In this case, the meaning of the verse is that 'the hypocrites are apprehensive lest a chapter should be sent down upon the faithful informing the hypocrites of the true contents of their own hearts or informing the faithful of the true contents of the hypocrites' hearts.'

However, some might reject this reading because it requires an arbitrary distinction to be made between pronouns, but its supporters could argue that there is no problem in Arabic rhetoric with such a distinction being made so long as the meaning of the verse is not impaired. Another argument in defence of this reading might be that the distinction is not arbitrary, because a previous verse has already described how the hypocrites swear oaths to the faithful in order to please them, after which God rebukes them by saying that God and His Messenger are more worthy of being pleased if they were truly faithful. Therefore, the current verse builds on this theme by saying that the hypocrites are afraid lest a chapter of revelation should be sent down to the faithful informing them of what is really in the former's hearts, which would destroy their trust in them. According to this view, the pronoun refers back to the faithful because that is what the context of the verse most strongly indicates. Therefore, there is no arbitrary distinction whatsoever.

The answer to this is that there is no disputing that the topic of discussion in these verses and many of the verses before and after them is the hypocrites, or that the context of these verses is that they are addressed to the Prophet and no one else. Meanwhile, the phrase, *they swear to you by Allah, to please you*, which is addressed to the faithful, is a temporary shift in address (*iltifāt*) for a specific purpose, after which the address shifts back to the Prophet. Therefore, one cannot argue that the context of the verses shows they are addressed primarily to the faithful. After all, were this the case, it would have been better to say: 'Lest a chapter be sent down <u>to you</u> [pl.] informing <u>you</u> about what is in their hearts.' Therefore, it does not make sense to switch to the third-person pronoun, 'them' when previously the faithful were addressed directly as 'you.'

Now, if one were to argue that the passage, *the hypocrites are apprehensive...*, is intended to explain why the hypocrites are swearing oaths to the faithful to keep them happy, this diverts this group of verses from their primary purpose, which we explained at the beginning of this section and, in doing so, deprives it of its internal logic and the interconnection between verses.

The verse, *the hypocrites are apprehensive...*, is not intended to explain why the hypocrites are swearing oaths at all. On the contrary, this is a new topic of discussion with its own goal, which is clearly visible when you study all eleven verses.

To conclude, the verses previous to this do not contain any mention of the faithful that would make it necessary to connect them with the current group, such that the use of the pronoun '*them*' could be taken as a reference to the faithful. This is the arbitrary distinction mentioned above, and such a reading is not in keeping with the eloquence of the Qur'an, because it introduces unnecessary ambiguity into the meaning of the verse.

The correct opinion is that the pronoun '*them*' in *lest a chapter should be sent down against them* refers to the hypocrites, as we have already stated. There is no problem saying that a chapter that a chapter of revelation is sent down 'upon' (*'alā*, translated as 'against') them when it is revealed to reveal the truth, call attention to their evil acts, and rebuke them for their hypocrisy. After all, they are outwardly part of the community of the faithful and cannot be distinguished from them, and God uses the preposition 'upon' with regards to the faithful in the verse, *and remember Allah's blessing upon you, and what He has sent down to you* ('alaykum, lit. 'upon you') *of the Book and wisdom, to advise you therewith* (2:231).

God has also used a similar expression in reference to the People of the Book in the verse, *the People of the Book ask you to bring down for them* ('alayhim, lit. 'upon them') *a Book from the sky* (4:153), and in reference to the idolaters in the verse, *and we will not believe your ascension until you bring down for us* ('alaynā, lit. 'upon us') *a book that we may read* (17:93). Now, insofar as the hypocrites are outwardly part of the community of the faithful, it is hardly more improbable that God should describe the Qur'an being sent down 'upon' them than it is for Him to do the same for the idolaters or the People of the Book. Now, the verbs *nuzūl*, *inzāl*, and *tanzīl* (all conveying various nuances of 'sending down') can take the preposition *ilā* ('to') to convey a sense of 'ending' or 'reaching' or *'alā* ('upon') to convey a sense of coming down from a higher place. The Qur'an uses both of these prepositions abundantly and the meaning of sending down the Book 'to' a people or 'upon' a people means that the revelation is addressed to their affairs and to explain what will benefit them in this world and the next.

As for the third objection, one might answer it by saying that the phrase, *Say, 'Go on deriding...*' shows that they were behaving apprehensively in a mocking fashion and were not seriously fearful of anything.

However, the problem with this response is that there are many verses that have been sent down in Sūrah al-Baqarah, Sūrah al-Nisāʾ, and others—all of which were revealed prior to these verses—which expose the wickedness in the hypocrites' hearts and make known their secrets. This shows, therefore, that they had a credible fear and that their apprehension was genuine, not pretend mockery.

Furthermore, in Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn, God describes the hypocrites as follows: *They suppose every cry is directed against them* (63:4), while in a similitude in Sūrah al-Baqarah, He says, *they put their fingers in their ears due to the thunderclaps, apprehensive of death* (2:19).

Therefore, the correct understanding of '*deriding*' here is that their derision and mockery is none other than their hypocrisy itself, when they profess outwardly what they do not believe in their hearts, as per the verse, *When they meet the faithful, they say, 'We believe,' but when they are alone with their devils, they say, 'We are with you; we were only deriding*' (2:14).

As for the fourth objection, the response to it is that the thing they were apprehensive of was actually their hypocrisy being brought to life and the true contents of their hearts being revealed for all to see. That is why they were fearful lest a chapter of revelation be sent down about them. Therefore, there is no difference between the thing they were apprehensive of at the beginning of the verse and what is mentioned at its end. In other words, when God says, *Allah will indeed bring out what you are apprehensive of*, this means that He will bring to light the hypocrisy and two-facedness that they have kept hidden and inform the people about the contents of their wicked hearts.

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوضُ وَنَلْعَبُ ۚ قُلْ أَبِاللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ وَرَسُولِهِ كُنتُمْ تَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

(9:65) ***If you question them, they will surely say, 'We were just gossiping* (nakhūḍ)** ***and amusing ourselves.' Say, 'Were you deriding Allah, His signs, and His apostles?'***

According to al-Ṭabriṣī in *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, *khawḍ* (lit. 'delve' but translated here as 'gossiping') means to step into a liquid, such as water or mud. However, this word was used metaphorically so often that it acquired other meanings too.

Al-Rāghib writes in his *Mufradāt*: '*Khawḍ* means to descend into a body of water and proceed through it (i.e. "to delve"). It is also used figuratively in

the sense of "to delve into matters." The Qur'an frequently uses it for situations in which it is blameworthy to involve oneself.'

Note that God does not explicitly mention what the hypocrites are being questioned about. So if the Prophet were to pose them a question, what would it be? God foretells that, in response, *they will surely say, 'We were just gossiping and amusing ourselves.'* The use of the preposition 'we were just' (*innamā kunna*) suggests that whatever they were doing, it was somehow connected to the Prophet, that it was something plainly visible that aroused suspicions about them, and that after the Prophet had discovered what they were up to, they could not find any excuse except to say that they were acting in jest and play, not intending anything serious.

The gossip (*khawḍ*) and amusement (*laʿb*) with which they sought to excuse their behavior were considered immoral acts that people would not normally want to be associated with, especially the faithful and anyone else who made an outward profession of faith, and especially if this was with regards to something that pertained to God and His Messenger. Therefore, this suggests that they could not find any other justification for their behavior to conceal what they were really planning other than this, suggesting that, even on appearance, what they were doing would have seemed extremely suspect.

For this reason, God commanded His Prophet to rebuke them on the basis of their excuse: *Say, 'Were you deriding Allah, His signs, and His apostles?'* Then the true nature of their actions is explained in the following verse: *They swear by Allah that they did not say it. But they certainly did utter the word of unfaith and renounced faith after their submission. They contemplated what they could not achieve...* (9:74).

Based on all of these circumstantial indicators, it is clear that the hypocrites had planned to do some harm to the Prophet, such as assassinating him or laying a deadly trap for him and had actually taken practical steps to put this into action and engaged in wicked discussions about it. However, they erred in their plots and the Prophet remained unharmed. The arrow missed its mark. Then, when their conspiracy came to light and the Prophet questioned them about what they had been trying to do, they excused themselves by saying that they had only been gossiping and amusing themselves. Based on this, the Prophet rebukes them with God's words, *Were you deriding Allah, His signs, and His messengers?* After this, God rejects the excuses they proffered and reveals their true intentions.

In short, then, the verse's meaning is as follows:

'I swear that if you were to ask them about what you saw them doing,

"Why did you do that?" when it is obvious that it had something to do with you, they will surely answer, "We meant no harm, it is not what you think, so do not think ill of us, we were merely gossiping and amusing ourselves to pass the time. It was nothing serious, only jest."

'In doing so, they confess to mocking God, His signs, and His Messenger, because they are confessing that their behavior towards you was merely for gossip and amusement. Therefore, they have mocked God and His Messenger. Therefore, you should tell them, "Were you deriding God, His signs, and His messengers?" In other words, ask them whether they seriously mean to excuse their wicked behavior by presenting it as another evil deed, namely mocking God, His signs, and His Messenger, which is tantamount to disbelief?'

It is not unlikely that the central purpose of the verse is to show how their behavior is, in fact, mocking the Messenger and it only mentions God and His signs to show the full implications of mocking the Messenger. After all, the Messenger is a sign of God, so to deride the Messenger is to deride God's signs, and to deride God's signs is to deride God Almighty Himself. Therefore, mocking the Messenger is tantamount to mocking God, His signs, and His Messenger all at once.

لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا قَدْ كَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ ۚ إِنْ نَعْفُ عَنْ طَائِفَةٍ مِنْكُمْ نُعَذِّبْ طَائِفَةً بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

(9:66) ***Do not make excuses. You have disbelieved after your faith.' If We forgive a group among you, We will punish another group* (ṭā'ifa)*, for they have been guilty.***

Al-Rāghib says in his *Mufradāt*: '*Ṭawf* means to walk around something. From this is derived the word *ṭā'if*, meaning someone who patrols outside homes to keep them safe... and the word *ṭā'ifa*, which means a group of people or a piece of something.

'God says, *But why should not there go forth a group* (ṭā'ifa) *from each of their sections to become learned in religion*—and some say that *ṭā'ifa* can be used for to denote as few as one person from a larger group, as per the verse, *if two groups of the faithful fight one another...* (49:9), and the verse, *when two groups among you were about to lose courage...* (3:123).

'And when the word *ṭā'ifa* is used in the plural sense, it is considered a plural of *ṭā'if*, but if it is used to denote the singular then it is grammatically plural but figuratively singular, or it can be treated like the words *riwāya*

("narration") or *'allāma* ("extremely learned")."

However, some scholars have erred by denying that the word *ṭā'ifa* can apply to one or two persons from a larger group of people as readily as it can apply to three or more, resulting in them developing a faulty understanding of its meaning. There is no evidence to support their assertion, and the word itself does not tell us anything specific about the number of persons to which it refers. However, the fact that *ṭā'ifa* can be used to signify a piece of something suggests that it can validly be used to denote an individual person from a larger group as well.

Therefore, the phrase, *do not make excuses. You have disbelieved after your faith*, forbids the hypocrites from excusing their actions on the basis of them being mere amusement. In particular, *you have disbelieved after your faith* shows that their excuses are of no benefit as these still mean that they have still disbelieved after their faith.

The meaning of faith here is the profession or appearance of faith that they showed outwardly to others, as opposed to genuine faith, which is divine guidance that is not followed by error. This reading is supported by the later verse, *but they certainly did utter the word of unfaith and renounced faith after their submission* (9:74), which replaces the word '*faith*' (īmān) with '*submission*' (islām), which means to make an outward profession of faith in the form of the two testimonies.

Now, one might say that there are many levels of faith, including a weak level of belief or conviction that can be lost, such as the faith of those in whose hearts is a sickness, for God has counted them amongst the faithful but also mentioned them alongside the hypocrites. There is no reason why they cannot abandon such faith. After all, God has removed the faith of those who were stronger in faith than them, as He relates in the verse, *Relate to them an account of him to whom We gave Our signs, but he cast them off. Thereupon Satan pursued him, and he became one of the perverse. Had We wished, We would have surely raised him by their means, but he clung to the earth and followed his desires* (7:176).

He also says, *As for those who believe and then disbelieve, then believe and then disbelieve and then increase in disbelief, Allah shall never forgive them, nor shall He guide them to any way* (4:137). In fact, the Qur'an frequently mentions disbelief after belief. Therefore, there is no reason why faith that is not firmly rooted in the heart cannot be effaced.

Of course, well-established faith and deeply rooted beliefs will never fade, as God says elsewhere, *whomever Allah guides is rightly guided* (7:178), and

indeed Allah does not guide those who mislead (16:37).

As for when God says, *if We forgive a group among you, We will punish another group*, this shows that the hypocrites being discussed in the present set of verses were very numerous, and that because the sentence of punishment has been passed against them, they must suffer punishment. Therefore, even if God spares some of them this punishment due to some benefit that obtains from this mercy, the punishment will still fall on the remainder of the group. This is the meaning we understand from the passage *if We forgive a group among you, We will punish another group* based on its order and its context.

In other words, it often seems like there is a necessary connection between cause and effect here, which means that the effect comes into being as a result of the cause. However, the present verse shows that this is not always the case, as the effect here is conditioned by the fact that the punishment is due against the hypocrites collectively. Therefore, if God forgives some of them, the remainder will have to be punished without the possibility of reprieve.

Based on the above, we can understand, first of all, why God says that if He forgives some of the hypocrites, He will punish others. This provides the basis for a response to the objection some have raised about the verse, namely that there is no necessary connection between forgiving some and punishing others—so how can one be conditioned on the other?

The answer to this is that the sentence of punishment has been passed against the hypocrites collectively, which means some of them must be punished. However, this means that some can still be forgiven, in which case the remainder must be punished.

The second point we can grasp from the above is that the meaning of 'forgiveness' (*'afuww*) here is to spare them punishment due to some benefit this brings to the religion rather than forgiveness in the sense of God forgiving them their sin on the basis of their repenting. This is because it would make no sense to say: 'If We forgive the sins of a group of you because they have repented, We will punish the rest for their sins, but if they all repented, we would not punish any of them whatsoever.' What is more, God enjoins all of them to repent in the subsequent verse, *Yet if they repent, it will be better for them; but if they turn away, Allah shall punish them with a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter* (9:74).

The third point is that the forgiveness mentioned in the verse means to be spared punishment in this world, and the punishment referenced also means punishment in this world. This is because, as other verses of the Qur'an explicitly state, punishment in the Hereafter can only be removed through

repentance or intercession, neither of which are in operation in our present discussion. As for repentance, it is clear that this is not what the verse intends, and as for intercession, numerous verses of the Qur'an attest to the fact that intercession can only be obtained in the Hereafter by a believer whose faith has been accepted by God—and we have discussed this at length in the first volume of this commentary.

The fourth point is that there is nothing to preclude the entirety of the passage, *Do not make excuses. You have disbelieved after your faith. If We forgive a group among you...*, being included in the Prophet's speech, as we have already established that the meaning of forgiveness in this verse is to be spared punishment in this world as a matter of political expediency. Therefore, there is nothing to indicate that this passage is not part of what God is telling His Prophet to say to the hypocrites.

However, the apparent meaning of the following verses suggests that this is part of God's speech, which is addressed to the hypocrites. Therefore, this is a transition (*iltifāt*) from addressing the Prophet to addressing them. And what this transition conveys is God's utter wrathfulness and extreme anger toward them for their behavior, as though it is not enough for the Prophet to convey His message to them, but He turns to address them directly Himself to threaten them with a punishment against which there can be no protection and from which there can be no escape.

الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ ۚ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمُنْكَرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ
عَنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَقْبِضُونَ أَيْدِيَهُمْ ۚ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ هُمُ
الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْكُفَّارَ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ هِيَ حَسْبُهُمْ ۚ وَلَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُقِيمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾

(9:67-68) ***The hypocrites, men and women, are from one another: they bid what is wrong and forbid what is right, and are tight-fisted. They have forgotten Allah, so He has forgotten them. The hypocrites are indeed the transgressors. Allah has promised the hypocrites, men and women, and the faithless, the Fire of hell, to remain in it. That suffices them. Allah has cursed them, and there is a lasting punishment for them.***

Some commentators have said this marks the beginning of a new discussion concerning the state of the hypocrites in general by mentioning some

general identifying qualities they all share and foretelling the requital that God has in store for them in the hereafter, before turning to discuss the state of the faithful in general by mentioning some general identifying qualities they all share and foretelling the rewards God has set aside for them in contrast to the hypocrites, so as to provide a comprehensive account of what awaits everyone in the Hereafter. The evidence for this last point is that God mentions the disbelievers alongside the hypocrites, *Allah has promised the hypocrites, men and women, and the faithless, the Fire of hell…*

However, it appears that this verse is actually intended to provide an explanation for what God says in the previous verse, namely, *If We forgive a group among you, We will punish another group*. As such, this verse, like the previous one, is still being addressed to the hypocrites directly.

Hence, insofar as the previous verse indicates that God will not let the hypocrites alone until He punishes them for their crimes and, even if He spares some of them worldly punishment because of some wisdom or benefit this secures, He will seize the remainder with punishment. But this also gives rise to the question: How shall God punish some if He spares others? Is this not merely guilt by association? The answer to this, provided in the present verses, is that the hypocrites are all from one another because they all share in the same wicked character traits and deeds and, therefore, they all share the same recompense for these deeds and consequences for their state of being.

Perhaps the verse mentions *the hypocrites, men and women* together, even though women have not been mentioned previously, to emphasise the unity of all hypocrites in spiritual qualities and to hint that there are also women who are active in these seditious groups and activities that are undermining the Muslim community.

Based on this, the meaning of the verse is that one should not be surprised that some of the hypocrites will be punished when others are let off, because all of the hypocrites—men and women alike—share a common set of moral and spiritual qualities that unify them in spite of their multiplicity. Therefore, they belong to one another, they share the same traits and deeds, and God has ordained the same punishment for them.

The hypocrites are the ones who bid others to evil and discourage others from good deeds in the way of God. In other words, they have forgotten God because they have turned aside from His remembrance because they are transgressors who have forsaken the path of divine servanthood. As a result, God has forgotten them and will not grant them the rewards He bestows upon His servants who are mindful of the station of their Lord.

Then God mentions what He has promised them: *Allah has promised the hypocrites, men and women, and the faithless*—note that he includes the faithless with them because, in His eyes, they are all alike—*the Fire of hell, to remain in it. That suffices them*—as a recompense, and it will not go beyond them to affect anyone else—*Allah has cursed them*—by banishing them from His mercy—*and there is a lasting punishment for them*—which will not end and from which they will never escape.

Based on this, it is apparent that the passage, *they have forgotten Allah, so He has forgotten them...* is an explanation of the earlier phrase, *they bid what is wrong and forbid what is right, and are tight-fisted*.

From this, we can deduce that enjoining good, forbidding evil, and spending in the way of God are all forms of remembrance.

كَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْكُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرَ أَمْوَالًا وَأَوْلَادًا فَاسْتَمْتَعُوا بِخَلَاقِهِمْ فَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِخَلَاقِكُمْ كَمَا اسْتَمْتَعَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ بِخَلَاقِهِمْ وَخُضْتُمْ كَالَّذِي خَاضُوا ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

(9:69) ***Similar to those who were before you, who were more powerful than you and more abounding in wealth and children: they enjoyed their share* (khalāqihim)*; you too enjoy your share, just like those who were before you enjoyed their share, and you have gossiped as they gossiped. They are the ones whose works have failed in this world and the Hereafter; and it is they who are the losers.***

According to al-Rāghib, *khalāq* refers to the blessings that a human being acquires through his moral character. As God says elsewhere, *but for such there is no share in the Hereafter* (2:200).

This verse is a continuation of God's address to the hypocrites, which began with the verse, *Do not make excuses. You have disbelieved after your faith* (9:66), and fits within the same context and flow of discourse. It compares the state of the hypocrites to the disbelievers and hypocrites who came before them in order to prove the point made in the previous verse, namely that the hypocrites, men and women, are from one another. This is because all of the hypocrites and the disbelievers share a single common nature in that they have all turned aside from the remembrance of God and devoted themselves instead to amusing themselves with the transitory enjoyments of this world,

such as wealth, offspring, and gossiping about God's signs. As a result, their works will fail in this world and the next, and they will suffer loss.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse appears to be as follows: 'You are like those who came before you who had power, wealth, and offspring—and were in fact superior and more abounding than you in all of these—and who enjoyed their share of this world. You have enjoyed as they enjoyed, and you have amused yourselves and they amused themselves. But their worlds failed in this world and the Hereafter and they were the losers. You too, like them, shall see your works fail in this world and the Hereafter, and that is why God has promised you Hellfire, in which you will dwell eternally, and cursed you.'

God mentions that those who came before were more powerful and more enriched with wealth and children to call attention to the fact that, in spite of all of this, they could not thwart Him and that none of this saved their works from going awry or saved them from loss. So, the Qur'an asks the hypocrites around the Prophet: 'What will be your fate, when you are weaker than they and lesser in both wealth and offspring?'

أَلَمْ يَأْتِهِمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَقَوْمِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَأَصْحَابِ مَدْيَنَ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَاتِ ۚ أَتَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ۖ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَٰكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

(9:70) ***Has there not come to them the account of those who were before them—the people of Noah, 'Ad, and Thamud, and the people of Abraham, the inhabitants of Midian, and the towns that were overturned? Their messengers brought them manifest proofs. So it was not Allah who wronged them, but it was they who used to wrong themselves.***

In this verse, God turns back to address the Prophet and refers to the hypocrites as 'them' and reminds them of the stories that the Qur'an has recounted of past peoples. It specifically mentions the people of Noah, the entirety of whom God punished with drowning; 'Ad—the people of Hūd—who He destroyed with an earthquake; the people of Abraham, who were ruled by Nimrod and whom God deprived of His blessings; the *towns that were overturned* were settlements that God overturned the ground underneath them so that their bottommost part became their topmost part, as happened with the people of Lot.

Their messengers brought them manifest proofs—meaning they brought them clear signs, proofs, and arguments, and this is a summary description of what transpired with them. In other words, their messengers brought them clear signs, they denied them, and so they were destroyed. It was not in God's plan to wrong them, for He made truth and falsehood clear to them, distinguished good sense from deviation, and guidance from error. However, it was the peoples and nations who wronged themselves by immersing themselves in the enjoyments of this world and mocking God's signs and denying His messengers.

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٧١﴾

(9:71) ***But the faithful, men and women, are comrades of one another: they bid what is right and forbid what is wrong and maintain the prayer, give the zakāt, and obey Allah and His Apostle. It is they to whom Allah will soon grant His mercy. Indeed Allah is all-mighty, all-wise.***

Now God turns His attention to describing the state of the faithful in general in contrast to the description He has just given of the hypocrites, saying, *But the faithful, men and women, are comrades of one another* to show that in spite of their multiplicity and differences in terms of number and gender, they share a single being that is not divided in the least, and hence they are comrades of one another.

It is for this reason that they enjoin one another to good deeds and dissuade one another from evil. Therefore when the different members of a community look after one another, comradeship (*wilāya*) extends throughout it, and they enjoin the good and forbid the evil amongst themselves.

Then, God describes them by saying that they *maintain the prayer, give the* zakāt. These are the two main pillars of the Islamic faith; prayer is the pillar of worship, for it embodies the relationship between God and His creation, while *zakāt* embodies relations between people.

To this, He adds that they *obey Allah and His Messenger*—the phrase '*obey Allah*' covers obeying all of the divine laws, while the phrase '*and His Messenger*' includes all of the laws of governance that the Prophet issues to

govern the affairs of the community, set right their affairs, and command them on military campaigns; the judgements he issues in court cases; the application of criminal law; and the like thereof.

Given that, obeying the Messenger, from another angle, also includes obeying all of the divine laws God has sent down from the heavens, as it is the Messenger who proclaims the truth and calls others to observe the roots and branches of the religion.

It is they to whom Allah will soon grant His mercy: This foretells that God has ordained that the believers thus described be enshrouded by His mercy, and this contrasts with the description of the hypocrites, given above, *they have forgotten Allah, so He has forgotten them*. It appears that the verse's coda, *indeed Allah is all-mighty, all-wise*, also provides the rationale for them being granted this mercy, as it is God's peerless might that means nothing can obstruct His mercy and there is no flaw or gap in His wisdom.

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ
فِيهَا وَمَسَاكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ ۚ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ
هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٧٢﴾

(9:72) ***Allah has promised the faithful, men and women, gardens with streams running in them, to remain therein forever, and good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden*** **(ʿAdn).** ***Yet Allah's pleasure is greater; that is the great success.***

The name *ʿAdn* ('Eden') is derived from a verbal noun meaning to reside or dwell somewhere. One might say 'he dwelt there' (*ʿadana bi al-makān*), meaning he remained there and inhabited it. From the same root is derived the word *maʿdin* ('mine' or 'lode') because minerals and jewels are found therein. Therefore, the phrase '*Gardens of Eden*' (jannāt ʿAdn) actually denotes the gardens in which the faithful will dwell eternally.

Yet Allah's pleasure is greater: In other words, based on the context in which this phrase occurs, God's satisfaction with them is even greater than all of this. The phrase '*Allah's pleasure*' (riḍwānun min Allāh) is indefinite to magnify it and show that it cannot be measured or encompassed by human minds or to show that any satisfaction from God, however small, is greater in worth than all of this. This is not only because all of this emanates from God's satisfaction with a person or is an extension of this satisfaction, even if this is

true in itself, but because the essence of divine servanthood to which the Book of God calls people means to serve God out of love for Him, not because one desires paradise or fears hellfire. On the contrary, the greatest happiness and greatest success for the one who loves God is to win the satisfaction of his Beloved rather than seeking anything to satisfy himself.

And, as if as a reference to this, God concludes the verse with the words, *that is the great success*. The phrasing of this sentence conveys a meaning of exclusivity, namely that God's pleasure is at the heart of every great success, including the great success of attaining Paradise. After all, were there nothing of the reality of divine pleasure in the blessing of Paradise, these would not be blessings but misfortunes instead.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَمَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٧٣﴾

(9:73) *O Prophet! Strive* (jāhid) *against the faithless and the hypocrites, and be severe with them. Their refuge shall be hell, and it is an evil destination.*

To strive (*jihād* or *mujāhada*) against a people means to do your utmost to resist them and repel them, and this can be in word, in deed, or even through fighting them. The Qur'an often uses this term in the sense of warfare, although it sometimes uses it in other senses as well, as per the verse, *as for those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them in Our ways* (29:69).

When God tells His messenger to strive against the faithless, this is in the sense of fighting them because they are openly hostile and opposed to him. As for the hypocrites, they are those who do not show their faithlessness nor openly express their hostility. On the contrary, they keep their true feelings hidden and rely on plots and conspiracies to overturn events. Therefore, it is meaningless to talk about striving against them in the sense of fighting or waging war on them. What would seem most plausible, then, is that the Qur'an is using the verb 'strive' here to denote expending one's energies in whatever manner is most expedient to resist them and thwart their plants. For example, expediency might dictate that one should isolate them, disassociate from them, and avoid interacting with them, or it might dictate that one should verbally admonish them, or it might dictate that they should be banished and exiled to another place, or it might dictate that they be put to death if they are found to have acted treasonously, and so on.

Something that might indicate the that above reading—that 'strive' in the verse refers to expending one's efforts in any manner to resist them—is the intended meaning is the use of the phrase, *and be severe with them*, which means to be harsh and aggressive towards them.

As for the phrase, *their refuge shall be hell, and it is an evil destination*, this follows on from the command at the beginning of the verse and perhaps provides a rationale for it, as if to render the full meaning: 'Those disbelievers and hypocrites are worthy of being struggled against, for their refuge is hell.'

يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ مَا قَالُوا وَلَقَدْ قَالُوا كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَكَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِسْلَامِهِمْ
وَهَمُّوا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوا ۚ وَمَا نَقَمُوا إِلَّا أَنْ أَغْنَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۚ
فَإِنْ يَتُوبُوا يَكُ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ يَتَوَلَّوْا يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللَّهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا فِي الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿٧٤﴾

(9:74) ***They swear by Allah that they did not say it. But they certainly did utter the word of unfaith and renounced faith after their submission. They contemplated what they could not achieve, and they were vindictive only because Allah and His Messenger had enriched them out of His grace. Yet if they repent, it will be better for them; but if they turn away, Allah shall punish them with a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter, and they shall not find on the earth any guardian or helper.***

The context of this verse indicates that the hypocrites did some evil deed and then sought to excuse it through something they said, but that when the Prophet rebuked them and held them to account for their utterance they swore that this was not what they had said, as we have already seen in the previous verse, *if you question them, they will surely say, 'We were just gossiping and amusing ourselves'* (9:65), which shows that they were excusing their behavior by saying that it was done in amusement and jest.

However, God denounces them as liars in both matters. With regard to their denial of their own words, He says, *but they certainly did utter the word of unfaith*, which He further explains through the phrase, *and renounced faith after their submission* to show that, had they uttered these words in earnest, this was tantamount to disbelieving after embracing Islam.

Note that in this verse He says *and renounced faith after their submission* (islām) here, while He had previously said, *you have disbelieved after your faith*

(īmān) (9:66)—why is 'submission' mentioned in this verse, but 'faith' is used in the earlier one? Perhaps this is because the words of the earlier verse were those of the Prophet, who was speaking to the hypocrites' outward appearance, based on their claims to believe and their outward show of faith. On the other hand, the present verse is the speech of God, who knows everything that is visible and everything that is hidden and, therefore, can see that they are not true believers and that they had not gone beyond uttering the two testimonies of faith with their tongues. In other words, they were Muslims but not believers and, through their words, they had forsaken Islam for faithlessness. This indicates that they had said something that contained an explicit rejection of one or both of the two testimonies of faith.

Alternatively, the earlier verse might refer to their deeds, as they had intended to do harm to the Prophet. Now, a deed without words that does not achieve its intended effect does not impair a person's status as a Muslim, as this is determined by their profession of belief. Instead, such an action is to the detriment of their faith, which is determined by what they believe. By contrast, the second verse refers to the excuse they offered for their suspicious behavior, and this does invalidate their status as Muslims, because this is determined by what they profess—in contrast to faith, which devolves to the belief in one's heart.

As for their denial of the evil deeds they had done and their attempts to present it as amusement and jest, this is what God refers to with the words, *they contemplated what they could not achieve*.

After this, God disparages them by saying, *and they were vindictive only because Allah and His Messenger had enriched them out of His grace*. In other words, they were displeased because God and His Messenger had enriched them in the form of the spoils He had granted them, the security and comfort He had provided for them, and because He had provided them with the means to produce wealth and amass riches from every direction. The Prophet is included in this because he had guided them to a righteous way of life that opened the doors of blessings to them in the heavens and upon the earth, divided the spoils amongst them, and spread justice amongst them.

Therefore, this is a juxtaposition of two opposite things. On the one hand, God has enriched them, and to enrich someone would normally cause them to be happy and grateful. However, in this case, it is a source of rancor and displeasure, as though they had been wronged or mistreated. One could say that the verse makes it seem as though they see God's kindness towards them as cruelty. Therefore, it is a form of derision mixed with disapproval, similar

to the verse, *and make your provision that you deny?* (56:82), which means that you make the provision that God has granted you a reason for denying His signs, while logically this should be something that makes you grateful for His blessings and pleased with His gifts. In other words: 'Instead of giving thanks for your provision, you deny God's signs!'

The pronoun '*His*' in the phrase '*out of His grace*' refers to God. In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī explains: 'God did not say, "out of their [dual] grace", only because one does not combine God with any other being in a pronoun out of respect for God's magnificence. That is why, when the Prophet heard someone say, "Whoever obeys God and His Messenger has been guided, and whoever disobeys them [dual] has gone astray!", he told him: "What a terrible preacher you are for these people!" He said: "What should I have said, O Messenger of God?" He said: "Say: 'And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger', for this is what God says in the verse, *but Allah and His Messenger are worthier that they should please Him* (9:62)." Some also say that the verse does not say "out of their grace" because all grace belongs to God and the Messenger is also part of God's grace.'

However, there is another element at play here in addition to the veneration and magnification of God, which we have already discussed in our commentary on the verse, *They are certainly faithless who say, 'Allah is the third of a trinity'* (5:73). In short, God's oneness is not a oneness of number and, therefore, it cannot have anything else added to it to produce a number such as two, or three, or four.

Then God explains to these hypocrites that, in spite of their grievous sins, their explicit faithlessness in God, and their contemplation of what they could not achieve, they can still turn back to their Lord. He then explains the outcome of this repentance and the outcome of turning away from His grace, saying, *yet if they repent, it will be better for them*—because it will bring them His forgiveness and Paradise—*but if they turn away*—and refuse to repent—*Allah shall punish them with a painful punishment in this world*—by making an example out of them, or by urging the Prophet to plot against them and plan their destruction. And even if it is not part of their punishment, the fact that their hypocrisy means that they are opposing the system of cause and effect that is built upon faithfulness and sincerity, this system of cause and effect will turn against them, shatter them, and expose them for what they are, and this would suffice as a recompense. As God says, *and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot* (9:24)—*and the Hereafter*—with the punishment of Hellfire.

...and they shall not find on the earth any guardian or helper:

Meaning, that they shall find no guardian in the earth who can look after their affairs and turn aside the punishment from them, nor any helper who can support them and help them repel the punishment with which they have been threatened. This is because the hypocrites are all from one another and united by their corrupt beliefs. Their corrupt root cuts them off from all the various means and resources in the cosmos to which they could take recourse. Therefore, they truly have no guardian to protect them nor helper to assist them, and perhaps this part of the verse is an indication towards the meaning we highlighted when discussing *a painful punishment in this world*, above.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, about the verse, *the hypocrites are apprehensive lest a chapter should be sent down against them*, we read: Some say that this verse was revealed about twelve men who had plotted to ambush the Messenger of God at ʿAqaba on his return from Tabūk, but Gabriel warned the Messenger of God in advance and told him to send people ahead to strike the faces of their mounts.

ʿAmmār was leading the mount of the Messenger of God and Ḥudhayfa was driving it. So he said to Ḥudhayfa, 'Go and strike the faces of their mounts', so he struck them until he drove them off.

When the Prophet arrived, he said to Ḥudhayfa, 'Did you recognise any of them?'

He said, 'I did not recognise any of them.'

The Messenger of God said, 'They were so-and-so and so-and-so...'—and he counted their names off one by one.

Ḥudhayfa said, 'Why not send someone after them to kill them?'

He said, 'I do not want the Arabs to say, "Once Muḥammad had triumphed with his companions, he began to kill them off."' This is narrated from Ibn Kaysān.

A similar account is narrated from Imām al-Bāqir, with the additional detail that the hypocrites plotted together to kill him and told one another, 'If he finds out, we will say, "*We were just gossiping and amusing ourselves*" (9:65), and if he does not, we will kill him.'

Some say that a group of the hypocrites said on the Tabūk campaign, 'This man thinks that he will storm the palaces and citadels of Syria, it will never happen! It will never!' But God informed His Prophet of this and he gave orders that these men should be brought to him, whereat he repeated their words to them.

They said, 'O Prophet of God, *we were just gossiping and amusing ourselves*', and they swore oaths to that effect. Then the verse was revealed, *if you question them...* (9:65). This is narrated from al-Ḥasan and Qatāda.

Some have said that this was when he turned back from the Tabūk campaign to return to Medina, and there were three or four people in front of him deriding and laughing. One of them was laughing without saying anything. Gabriel came down and informed the Messenger of God of this. So, he summoned ʿAmmār b. Yāsir and said, 'These men are mocking me and the Qur'an, Gabriel told me of this. If you ask them, they will tell you, "We were just talking to pass the time on the journey!"'

So, ʿAmmār followed them and said, 'What do you find so amusing?'

They said: 'We were just talking to pass the time on the journey!'

ʿAmmār said, 'God and His Messenger have spoken the truth! May you burn in Hell!'

So, they went to the Prophet giving their excuses, so God send down these verses. This is narrated from al-Kalbī, ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, and Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī.

Some have said that on the Prophet's campaign to Tabūk, a man said, 'I have not seen anyone more deceitful in speech or more cowardly in battle than them'—meaning the Messenger of God and his companions. ʿAwf b. Mālik said to him, 'You have lied, but you are hypocrite!' He intended to inform the Messenger of God of this but revelation had already been sent down, so the man came to him offering his excuses. He said, '*We were just gossiping and amusing ourselves*.' This was what caused the verse to be revealed. This is narrated from Ibn ʿUmar, Zayd b. Aslam, and Muḥammad b. Kaʿb.

Some have said that one of the hypocrites said, 'Muḥammad was telling us that so-and-so's camel was in such-and-such a valley—what does he know about the Unseen?' Then, this verse was revealed.

Others have said that this verse was revealed about ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Warhaṭa. This is narrated by al-Ḍaḥḥāk.

(2) Also in *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, concerning the verse, *they swear by Allah that they did not say it* (9:74), we read: 'There is disagreement among commentators concerning who this reverse was revealed about. Some say that the Messenger of God was sitting under the shade of a tree and said, "A person will come to you and look at you through the

eyes of Satan." Not long after, a man with blue eyes approached and the Messenger of God called him over and asked him, "What do you and your comrades revile me for?" So the man went and returned with his companions, and they swore by God that they had done no such thing. Then God sent down this verse. This is narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās.

Others have said that the hypocrites went forth to Tabūk with the Messenger of God, then, when some of them were alone, they began to revile the Messenger of God and his Companions and make derogatory remarks about the religion. Ḥudhayfa reported this to the Messenger of God, who asked them, 'What is this that has reached me about you?' So, they swore by God that they had not said anything of the sort. This is narrated from al-Ḍaḥḥāk.

Some have said that this verse was revealed about Julās b. Suwayd b. Ṣāmit. The Messenger of God delivered a sermon one day at Tabūk, mentioned the hypocrites, called them 'filth' (*rijis*) and condemned them. On hearing this, Julās said, 'By God, if Muḥammad is truthful in what he says, then we are worse than donkeys!' ʿĀmir b. Qays heard him say this and responded, 'Yes, by God, surely Muḥammad speaks the truth, and surely you are worse than a donkey.' Then, when the Messenger of God returned to Medina, ʿĀmir b. Qays came to him and informed him of what Julās had said, but Julās denied this, saying, 'He is lying, O Messenger of God.'

So, the Messenger of God commanded the two of them to swear oaths in front of the pulpit. Julās stood up and swore an oath by God at the pulpit that he had said no such thing, then ʿĀmir got up and swore an oath that he had heard him say it. Then he said, 'O God! Send down truthfulness from us upon Your truthful Prophet!' The Messenger of God and the faithful said, 'Amen!' Then, before the two men had even separated Gabriel descended with the verse, until the sentence, *yet if they repent, it will be better for them*.

Julās got up and said, 'O Messenger of God, may God convey the truth of the matter to you, I am ready to repent. What ʿĀmir b. Qays has told you is true. I said those words, I repent to God and ask for His forgiveness.' The Messenger of God accepted this from him. This is narrated from al-Kalbī, Muḥammad b. Isḥāq, and Mujāhid.

Others have said that this verse was revealed about ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl, when he said, *When we return to the city, the mighty*

will surely expel the abased from it (63:8). This is narrated from Qatāda.

Some have said that this was revealed about the people of ʿAqaba, who had conspired together to assassinate the Messenger of God in ʿAqaba on his return from Tabūk. They planned to cut the saddle ties from his mount and then strike it until he fell, but God warned him of their plans. This was one of his miracles, for there was no way he could have known this except by way of revelation from God.

So, the Messenger of God arrived in ʿAqaba, accompanied by ʿAmmār and Ḥudhayfa, one of them leading his mount and the other driving it. He commanded all of the people who were with him to travel through the middle of the valley. His assassins were twelve or fifteen men in number, all of whose identities were known to the Messenger of God and he was able to name them one by one. This is narrated from al-Zajjāj, al-Wāqidī, and al-Kalbī. The full version of the story can be found in the work of al-Wāqidī.

Imām al-Bāqir said: 'Eight of them were from the Quraysh, and four were Arabs of other tribes.'

Author's comments: What al-Ṭabrisī has mentioned above is from what he collected and sifted out of the narrations transmitted in works of tradition-based Qur'anic commentaries and collections of traditions from both Sunnī and Shīʿī authorities. There are other narrations that he did not include—and, indeed, this was the appropriate choice, as we have omitted most of what al-Ṭabrisī omitted.

As for the narrations that he included in his commentary, some of them do not accord with the verses, except for the account concerning ʿAqaba that is sometimes cited in relation to the first verse of this section, *The hypocrites are apprehensive lest a chapter should be sent down against them…* (9:64) and sometimes relating the final verse, *They swear by Allah that they did not say it…* (9:74).

As for the other narrations transmitted regarding this verse, these are narrations concerning fragmentary accounts and narratives which, if authenticated, are general accounts about the hypocrites that do not necessarily pertain directly to the verses under discussion. The reader will recall that there are eleven verses in total in this section, all of which are connected to one another and appear to have been composed with a single purpose in mind. This is to call attention to one account concerning the hypocrites about their efforts to assassinate the Messenger of God and their uttering words of unbelief.

However, God intervened to prevent them from achieving their aims, so the Messenger of God asked them about their suspicious activities, and what they had said. They tried to cover up the true nature of their actions and denied ever saying such things, swearing oaths to this effect, but God denounced them as liars. This is a general summary of the contents of these verses, and the only narrations that appear to match these details are those concerning the events of ʿAqaba.

Therefore, most of these narrations cannot be used as a basis for interpreting these verses, unless we are to adopt the method of some scholars, which is to interpret verses using narrations based on the meaning of the narrations, regardless of whether the wording of the verses actually supports such a reading by conforming to the contents of the narration. However, there are often so many discrepancies between the verses and the narrations that these occasion pessimism about the latter's reliability, as will be evident to anyone who refers to these.

Another problem that these narrations present in terms of their reliability as a basis for interpreting these verses is that they frequently break up verses and separate different verses from one another by saying that each was revealed about a different person and for a different reason. However, the reader will recall that these verses all share a single context and appear to have been composed as a single coherent unit with a single purpose and topic in mind.

(3) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Ibn Mundhir, and Abū al-Shaykh narrate from al-Kalbī that when the Messenger of God was on his way back from Tabūk, there were three groups in front of him mocking God, His Messenger, and the Qur'an. However, one of them—a man by the name of Yazīd b. Wadīʿa—was not comfortable with the discussion and avoided them. About him was revealed the verse, *if We forgive a group among you, We will punish another group* (9:66)—here, the word '*group*' (*ṭā'ifa*) is used to refer to an individual.

Author's comments: This is the basis on which some commentators claim that the word *ṭā'ifa* can respond to one or many. However, this verse is clearly meant to be understood in general terms rather than referring to a specific person or persons. This is something observable in many verses of the Qur'an, as we have already discussed.

(4) In the same source (*al-Durr al-manthūr*), Ibn Mardawayh narrates from Ibn ʿAbbās: 'This verse was revealed about a group of the hypocrites from the Banū ʿAmr b. ʿAwf tribe, including Wadīʿa b. Thābit,

and a man from the Ashjaʿ tribe, who was an ally of theirs called Makhshī b. Ḥamīr, who were travelling with the Messenger of God on his expedition to Tabūk. They said to one another: "Do you think that fighting the Romans is like fighting anyone else? By God, I think we will be in chains by the morning!"

'Makhshī b. Ḥamīr said, "How I would have liked to give us each a hundred lashes so that a verse of the Qur'an would not be sent about us and our statements will not be revealed!"

'The Messenger of God said to 'Ammār b. Yāsir, "Catch up with those people, for they are damned, and ask them what they have said. If they deny it and keep it under wraps, tell them, 'Rather, you said such-and-such.'" So, he caught up with them, spoke to them as he had been bidden, so they began to excuse themselves. Whereat, God sent down the verse, *Do not make excuses. You have disbelieved after your faith. If We forgive a group among you...* (9:66)—the one whom God forgave was Makhshī b. Ḥamīr, who took the name 'Abd al-Raḥmān and asked God that he be slain as an anonymous martyr. He was slain at Yamāma, and none knew where he had been slain nor how he was slain, and no trace of him could be found after the battle.'

Author's comments: The story of Makhshī b. Ḥamīr appears in a number of narrations. However, even if it is authentic, this does not necessarily mean the verses were revealed as described, as its contents and those of the verses are markedly different.

It is not necessary for us, when we come across authentic accounts from the time of the Prophet, no matter what story they contain, to resort to them in order to explain verses of the Qur'an such that we obtain the meaning of the Qur'an through such accounts.

(5) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Abū al-Shaykh narrate from Ibn 'Abbās: 'How similar is tonight to yesterday, *similar to those who were before you, who were more powerful than you... and you have gossiped as they gossiped* (9:69)—these are the Children of Israel, who we resemble most closely. By He in whose hand is my soul, you will follow them such that if one of them entered a lizard's hole, you would enter it too.'

Author's comments: The same narration from Ibn 'Abbās appears in *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*.

(6) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, it is narrated from *Tafsīr al-Thaʿlabī*, from Abū Hurayra, from Abū Saʿīd al-Kuhdrī, from the Prophet: 'You will

follow the way of previous nations, cubit by cubit, span by span, and fathom by fathom, such that even if one of them entered the hole of a lizard, you would enter it too.' They said, 'O Messenger of God, you mean we will do as the Persians, the Romans, and the People of the Book did before us?' He said, 'Are there peoples besides them?'

In the same source, also from *Tafsīr al-Thaʿlabī* from Ḥudhayfa: 'The hypocrites who are amongst you today are worse than the hypocrites who were there during the time of the Messenger of God.' We said: 'How so?' He said: 'They concealed their hypocrisy, while those today proclaim it.'

(7) In *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, al-Ṣadūq narrates via his chain from al-Qāsim b. Muslim, from his brother ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Muslim: 'I asked Imām al-Riḍā about the verse, *they have forgotten Allah, so He has forgotten them* (9:67). He said, "Surely God does not forget or overlook anything, for it is only created and originated beings that forget and overlook things. Have you not heard the verse, *and your Lord is not forgetful*? (19:64). Rather, He only requites the one who has forgotten Him and forgotten the encounter of their Day by causing them to forget themselves, as He says in the verse, *and do not be like those who forget Allah, so He makes them forget their own souls* (59:19), or the verse, *So today We will forget them as they forgot the encounter of this day of theirs* (7:51). In other words, "We will forsake them just as they forsook preparing for the encounter of this day of theirs."'

(8) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Jābir, from Imām al-Bāqir: '*They have forgotten Allah*—meaning they have forsaken obedience to Him—*so He has forgotten them*—He has forsaken them.'

In the same source, it is narrated from Abū Muʿammar al-Saʿdānī that Imām ʿAlī said about the verse, *they have forgotten Allah, so He has forgotten them*: 'It only means that they have forgotten God in the abode of this world and not acted in obedience to Him—they have not believed in Him, nor in His Messenger—so He has forgotten them in the Hereafter—meaning He has not set aside any reward for them, so they have been forgotten in the distribution of goodness.'

Author's comments: Shaykh al-Ṣadūq also narrates this in *Maʿānī al-akhbār* via a chain of narrations going back to Abū Muʿammar from him.

(9) In *al-Kāfī*, via a chain of narrators going back to Abū Baṣīr, he asks Imām al-Ṣādiq about the verse, *the towns that were overturned? Their messengers brought them manifest proofs*. The Imām responds, 'These

were the people of Lot, whose town was overturned upon them, such that its highest point became its lowest.'

(10) In *Tahdhīb al-ahkām*, it is narrated via a chain of narrators from Ṣafwān b. Mihrān: 'I said to Imām al-Ṣādiq, "A Muslim woman who knows me for my work [as a camel driver] and who I know for her piety but who has no chaperone came to me and asked me to give her a ride. What should I do?" He said, "Give her a ride, for the male believer is a chaperone for the female one." Then he recited the verse, *but the faithful, men and women, are comrades of one another* (9:71).'

Author's comments: Al-'Ayyāshī also narrates this in his *Tafsīr* from Ṣafwān al-Jammāl, from Imām al-Ṣādiq.

(11) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, it is narrated from Thuwayr, from 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn: 'When the inhabitants of Paradise enter Paradise, and God's trustee (*walī*) enters the gardens and abodes and reclines, each believer will be on a throne surrounded by servants, branches laden with fruit will bend toward him, springs of water will erupt around him, rivers will flow beneath him, tables are spread out before him, cushions are placed for him, and servants bring him whatever he desires without him needing to ask them... the maidens of Paradise will come forth from the gardens of paradise to him and they will remain in this state for as long as God wills.

'Then the Almighty will look down upon them and say, "O My friends, the people of My obedience, and the inhabitants of My paradise who have made their home in my vicinity! Shall I inform you of something even better than where we are now?" They will answer, "Our Lord! What could be better than where we are now, where we have whatever we desire and enjoy all we gaze upon in the vicinity of the All-Generous?"

'God will repeat the question to them, and they will respond, "Our Lord! Yes!" And He will tell them, "My being pleased with you and affection for you is better and greater than where you are now!" They will respond, "Yes, our Lord! Your being pleased with us and Your affection for us is better and dearer to our hearts!"

'Then 'Alī b. Ḥusayn recited the verse, *Allah has promised the faithful, men and women, gardens with streams running in them, to remain therein forever, and good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden. Yet Allah's pleasure is greater; that is the great success* (9:72).'

(12) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Mardawayh narrates from Jābir that the

Messenger of God said, 'When the inhabitants of paradise enter paradise, God will say to them, "Do you desire that I increase anything for you?" They will say, "O our Lord! Is there anything left save that you have granted it to us?" He will answer, "Yes, my pleasure with you, for I shall never be displeased with you!"'

Author's comments: This idea is found in numerous narrations from both Sunnī and Shīʿī sources.

(13) In *Jāmiʿ al-jawāmiʿ*, from Abū al-Dardā', from the Prophet: 'Eden is God's abode that no eye hath seen, whose thought has not occurred to any human heart, and in whom none will dwell except three: The prophets, the veracious, and the martyrs. God says, "Blessed be the one who enters it."'

(14) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, about the verse, *O Prophet! Strive against the faithless and the hypocrites* (9:73), we read: 'My father related to me, from Abū 'Umayr, from Abū Baṣīr, from Imām al-Bāqir: "*Strive against the faithless and the hypocrites* by upholding the religious duties."'

(15) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Bayhaqī relates in *Shuʿub al-īmān* from Ibn Masʿūd: 'When the verse, *O Prophet! Strive against the faithless and the hypocrites*, was revealed, the Messenger of God was commanded to strive first with his hand, and if he was not able to do this, then with his heart, and if he was not able to do this, then with his tongue, and if he was not able to do this, then with his frowning countenance.'

Author's comments: There is some confusion in this tradition about the order of its parts, as striving with one's heart should occur after all of the other elements rather than in between them.

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Verses 75–80

These verses discuss another group of the hypocrites who disobeyed the ordinance on charities and refused to deliver their *zakāt* to the Messenger; they had been poor, but had sworn to God that if He enriched them and extended His grace to them, they would give charity and be amongst the righteous, but when He gave them wealth, they became stingy and refused.

They also mention yet other hypocrites who criticized the wealthy believers for giving charity, while also reproaching those who were poor and mocking them. God refers to all of these people as hypocrites and decrees that they shall never be forgiven for their deeds.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ عَاهَدَ اللَّهَ لَئِنْ آتَانَا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ
الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَلَمَّا آتَاهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ بَخِلُوا بِهِ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

(9:75-76) ***Among them are those who made a pledge with Allah: 'If He gives us* (ītā') *out of His grace, we will surely give charity and we will surely be among the righteous.' But when He gave them out of His grace, they begrudged it and turned away, being disregardful.***

The verb *ītā'* means to give (like *i'ṭā'*), however *ītā'* is commonly used for God's grace (*faḍl*), while *i'ṭā'* is used for wealth. However, here it is clearly being used in the sense of wealth, because they say, *we will surely give charity*, meaning we will give charity out of the wealth He has given them. The same is true in the following verse, which discusses stinginess.

The context of the verse suggests that it is discussing something that has actually taken place, and the narrations about these verses indicate that they were revealed about Tha'laba in the course of events that we will discuss in our treatment of the narrations below. However, the overall meaning of the verses is clear.

فَأَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يَلْقَوْنَهُ بِمَا أَخْلَفُوا اللَّهَ مَا وَعَدُوهُ
وَبِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

(9:77) *So it caused hypocrisy to ensue* (aʿqaba) *in their hearts until the day they will encounter it, because of their going back on what they had promised Allah and because of the lies they used to tell.*

The verb *aʿqba* means 'to bequeath.' In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, we read: '*Aʿqaba* (to cause to ensue) is synonymous with *awratha* (to bequeath) and *adā* (to deliver), although it can also be used in the sense of *jazā* (to recompense).' It is derived from *ʿaqab*, meaning to bring one thing after another thing.

The pronoun '*it*' in the phrase, *so it caused hypocrisy to ensue in their hearts* refers to their stinginess or to their miserly behavior. Therefore, the meaning of, *until the day they will encounter it*, is until they encounter their stinginess, meaning the day they encounter its recompense.

However, the pronouns could also be read as 'He' and 'Him' in reference to God, in which case, *they day they will encounter* Him is the Day of Judgement, as the Qur'an frequently refers to the Day of Judgement as the Day people encounter God, or it refers to the day on which they die, as we see in the verse, *Whoever expects to encounter Allah, Allah's time will indeed come* (29:5).

This second meaning—that it is the day they die—seems more plausible, as this would imply that they will remain stingy until the day they die, which makes more sense than saying that they will remain stingy until the day they are resurrected, as it is known that their condition will not change after their death.

...because of their going back on what they had promised Allah and because of the lies they used to tell: In other words, this stinginess bequeathed hypocrisy to them because it entailed them breaking their promise to God and persistently telling lies, both of which lead to a disjunction between their inner and outer states, which is the definition of hypocrisy.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'Their stinginess and refusal to give charity planted hypocrisy in their hearts, which will endure in them and never leave them until the day they die. This stinginess gave rise to their hypocrisy because it led them to break their promise to God and to persist in telling lies.'

Alternatively, the meaning of the verse could be read as follows: 'God requited them by allowing the trait of hypocrisy to take root in their hearts until the Day they encounter Him, which is the day on which they die, because they had broken their promises to Him and told lies.'

This verse shows, first, that breaking promises and uttering lies are both

causes of hypocrisy and signs of it.

Second, that hypocrisy is something that afflicts a person after belief, just as apostasy is something that occurs when a person disbelieves after believing. God says, *Then the fate of those who committed misdeeds was that they denied the signs of Allah and they used to deride them* (30:10). This shows that sinning can lead a person to deny the signs of God, and this denial might be both inward and outward, in which case it is disbelief, or it might be only inward, in which case it is hypocrisy.

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ ﴿٧٨﴾

(9:78) ***Do they not know that Allah knows their secret and their secret talks* (najwā)*, and that Allah is knower of all that is Unseen?***

Najwā refers to hidden communications; the question posed by this verse is rhetorical and intended to convey a rebuke or reprimand.

الَّذِينَ يَلْمِزُونَ الْمُطَّوِّعِينَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ إِلَّا جُهْدَهُمْ فَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنْهُمْ ۙ سَخِرَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٩﴾

(9:79) ***Those who blame the voluntary donors* (muṭawwiʿīn)*** ***from among the faithful concerning the charities—and as for those who do not find except what their means allow, they ridicule them—Allah shall put them to ridicule, and there is a painful punishment for them.***

Muṭawwiʿīn is derived from *taṭawwuʿ*, which means to do something that one's soul does not dislike and does not find difficult. Therefore, it is normally used to refer to supererogatory or recommended acts, as the soul tends to feel compelled to perform obligatory acts as it dislikes abandoning them.

Note that the *voluntary donors from among the faithful* are contrasted with *those who do not find except what their means allow*, which shows that the *voluntary donors* are a reference to those who give charities because they are wealthy and prosperous, as though the fact of their wealth makes it possible for them to give charities by choice without this being difficult for them. This is unlike *those who do not find except what their means allow*, as this means they were only able to acquire a certain sum of wealth through their efforts or that it is difficult for them to be satisfied with what little they have acquired in this way.

This verse represents either a new discussion or—according to some commentators—a further description of *those who made a pledge with Allah* (9:75), mentioned previously. The meaning of the verse is as follows: 'There are ones who criticise those who give charities voluntarily from amongst the wealthy members of the faithful and those who do not find much wealth save what their efforts allow from amongst the poor and impoverished. They criticise both the rich and the poor and the prosperous and the impoverished for giving charities and mock them. However, God mocks them and has a painful punishment in store for them.' This is a response to their mockery and a threat of terrible punishment.

اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ أَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾

(9:80) ***Whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah shall never forgive them because they defied Allah and His Messenger; and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot.***

This verse begins with an equivocation between the command *plead forgiveness* and the prohibition *do not plead forgiveness*. This shows that both doing the action and abstaining from it are the same, which means that the act is itself pointless. This is akin to the verse, *spend willingly or unwillingly, it shall never be accepted from you* (9:53).

The meaning is that these hypocrites will never be forgiven by God and it makes no difference whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not, because pleading forgiveness for them is pointless and will have no effect.

...even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times: This emphasizes what has already been said about the pointlessness of pleading forgiveness for them and showing that they will never attain the essence of forgiveness, whether you pray for them to be forgiven or you do not, and whether you pray once or seventy times, a little or a lot.

Note that the use of the number 'seventy' here is to signify an abundance of something rather than the actual number seventy, such that if one asked for their forgiveness once or more times beyond seventy, it might have some effect. That is why God explains the ineffectiveness of such prayers for forgiveness

with the phrase, *Allah shall never forgive them because they defied Allah and His Messenger*. In other words, what prevents them from receiving forgiveness is their disbelief in God and His Messenger. Therefore, because of this barrier, not asking God to forgive them is exactly the same as asking Him to do so, and it does not matter how many times one prays for their forgiveness, they are in a state of disbelief.

This shows that the coda of the verse, *and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot*, is intended to complement the meaning of what came before it. In fact, the statement reads almost like a syllogism: They disbelieved in God and His Messenger, so they are transgressors who have forsaken the service of the Divine, and God does not guide a transgressing lot. At the same time, forgiveness means to be guided to God's proximity and to paradise. Therefore, this forgiveness will never encompass them and they will never be able to obtain it.

Note also that using the number seventy to signify a general abundance of something in Qur'anic Arabic, is like the use of 'hundreds' or 'thousands' in everyday speech today.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, we read:

Some have said that these verses were revealed about Thaʿlaba b. Ḥāṭib, a member of the Helpers. He said to the Prophet, 'Ask God to provide me with wealth!' The Prophet said, 'O Thaʿlaba! A little that you give thanks for is better than a lot that you cannot manage. Do you not have a goodly exemplar in the Messenger of God? By He in whose hand is my soul, if I wished for mountains of gold and silver to move with me, they would.'

Then Thaʿlaba returned to him again and said, 'O Messenger of God! Ask God to provide me with wealth, for by He who sent you with the truth, if God provides me with wealth, I will give each person their due!' The Messenger of God said: 'O God! Provide Thaʿaba with wealth.' Thaʿlaba bought a sheep, and its offspring multiplied like worms until they were too numerous to graze in Medina, so he departed with his flock and settled in a valley, and his sheep needed so much pasture that he was kept too busy to attend Friday prayers or congregational prayers in general. God's Messenger sent a charity collector to him to take the charity due on the sheep, but he refused and was stingy. Thaʿlaba said, 'This charity is naught but the sister of the tribute due from Jews and Christians!' So the Messenger of God

said, 'Woe to Thaʿlaba! Woe to Thaʿlaba!' Then God sent down these verses. This account is narrated by Abū Umāma, but it is transmitted with an incomplete chain of narrators.

Others have said that Thaʿlaba came to a gathering of the Helpers and made them bear witness as he said: 'I swear, if God bestows His grace upon me, I will give charity out of it, ensure that each person receives their due, and look after my relatives with it.' So God tested him. His cousin died and left him an inheritance, but he did not keep his promise, so this verse was revealed. This is narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās, Saʿīd b. Jubayr, and Qatāda.

Some have said it was revealed about Thaʿlaba b. Ḥāṭib and Muʿattab b. Qushayr, both of whom were from the Banū ʿAmr b. ʿAwf tribe and both of whom said, 'If God provides us with wealth, we will surely give charity. But when God provided them with wealth, they became stingy with it.' This is narrated from al-Ḥasan and Mujāhid.

Author's comments: These narrations do not contradict one another, as it is entirely possible that Thaʿlaba made a pledge to the Prophet to this effect, then had a group of the Helpers bear witness to it, and that someone else may have also made the same pledge with him. Therefore, the narrations support one another.

The account narrated by al-Ḍaḥḥāk also supports the idea that these verses were revealed about some of the hypocrites: Nabtal b. al-Ḥārith, Jadd b. Qays, Thaʿlaba b. Ḥāṭib, and Muʿattab b. Qushayr.

There is a narration in *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, transmitted from al-Kalbī, that the verses were revealed about Ḥāṭib b. Abī Baltaʿa, who had some property that was held up in Syria, and he swore that if God granted it to him, he would give some as charity. Then, when God granted it to him, but he did not keep his oath. However, this narration does not cohere with the contents of the verse, as conveying some property to its rightful owner is not called 'giving out of one's grace' in the sense of *ītā'* (which is the verb used in the verse), but rather this is providing (*rizq*) or bestowing (*iʿtā'*).

(2) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is narrated by Abū al-Jārūd from Imām al-Bāqir about this verse: 'It refers to Thaʿlaba b. Ḥāṭib b. ʿAmr b. ʿAwf, who was needy and made a pledge to God that he would give charity if God granted him wealth, but when God granted him wealth, he was stingy with it.'

(3) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, and al-Nasā'ī all narrate from Abū Hurayra from the Prophet: 'The

hypocrite has three marks: When he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when he is given a trust, he betrays it.'

Author's comments: This is narrated from the Imāms of the Prophet's Household via multiple chains of transmission, and we have discussed some of these narrations already.

(4) In the same source, concerning the verse, *those who blame the voluntary donors* (9:79), al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh, and Abū Naʿīm in *al-Maʿrifa* all narrate from Ibn Masʿūd: 'When the verse of charity (*ṣadaqa*) was revealed, we used to struggle to give anything. When a man came and gave a lot of charity, they called him a show-off. When Abū ʿAqīl brought a half-measure as charity, the hypocrites said, "Surely God has no need of this charity!" Then the verse was revealed, *those who blame the voluntary donors from among the faithful concerning the charities—and as for those who do not find except what their means allow*.'

Author's comments: There are many narrations reported concerning the occasion of this verse's revelation that are similar in content to the ones we have already presented here. There are other narrations with a similar meaning too. All of them treat the verse as being detached from the context of the verses immediately before it.

(5) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrate from ʿUrwa: "Abd Allāh b. Ubayy told his associates, "If only you would stop spending your wealth on Muḥammad and his Companions, they would all surely desert him!" It was he who said the words, *the mighty will surely expel the abased* (63:8). So, God revealed the verse, *Whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah shall never forgive them* (9:80). The Prophet said, "I will plead forgiveness for them more than seventy times!" Then God revealed the verse, *it is the same for them whether you plead for forgiveness for them, or do not plead for forgiveness for them: Allah will never forgive them* (63:7).'

(6) In the same source, Ibn Abī Shayba, Ibn Jarīr, and Ibn Mundhir narrate from Mujāhid: 'When God sent down the verse, *even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah shall never forgive them*, the Prophet said, "I shall plead forgiveness for them more than seventy times!" So, God revealed in the chapter of the Qur'an about the hypocrites, *It is the same for them whether you plead for forgiveness*

for them, or do not plead for forgiveness for them: Allah will never forgive them. Indeed Allah does not guide the transgressing lot (63:7).'

Author's comments: There is no doubt that these verses were revealed towards the end of the Prophet's mission, and that they were definitely preceded by all of the Meccan chapters and verses and the majority of the Medinan chapters and verses. Someone who ponders on the meaning of the Book of God will also not have any doubt that there is no hope of salvation for the disbelievers or the hypocrites—who are worse than the disbelievers—should they die in a state of unbelief or hypocrisy, and there is no possibility of them receiving God's forgiveness. There are many Meccan and Medinan verses that are explicit in stating this.

So, how could someone in the Prophet's position be unaware of what God had revealed to him or not believe in the eternal punishment that God has promised the hypocrites with certainty, such that he could hope to undo God's definitive decree by obstinately pleading to God for their forgiveness?

Or how could he be unaware that the hesitation between the command and prohibition in the verse is for rhetorical effect, or that the number seventy is merely being used to signify an abundance of something here, such that he thinks they might be forgiven if he pleads more than seventy times?

It is also hard to see what, if anything, the verse from Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn that is quoted in the narrations— *It is the same for them whether you plead for forgiveness for them, or do not plead for forgiveness for them: Allah will never forgive them. Indeed Allah does not guide the transgressing lot*—adds to the meaning already expressed in the verse we are presently discussing, as it already makes clear, *whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah shall never forgive them because they defied Allah and His Messenger; and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot*. In both of these verses, God explains that He will never forgive the hypocrites because they are transgressors and God does not guide people who transgress.

Therefore, we can conclude that these narrations and others like them are probably fabrications and should be discounted.

(7) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Naḥḥās, Ibn Ḥibān, Ibn Mardawayh, and Abū Na'īm in *Ḥilya* all narrate from Ibn 'Abbās, 'I heard 'Umar say, "When 'Abd Allāh b. Ubayy died, the Messenger of God was called to offer funerary prayers for him. So he got up and, as he stood over him, I said: 'Will you pray over the enemy of God, 'Abd Allāh b.

Ubayy who said such-and-such and such-and-such?' Then I began to enumerate everything he had done. The Messenger of God kept smiling until I had gone on for a while, then said, 'O 'Umar, leave me be, for I have been given a say in this, as I have been told, *plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times* (9:80), so if I knew that by pleading more than seventy times for him, he would be forgiven, I would ask more than seventy times for him!'

'"Then the Messenger of God offered prayers over him, walked with his procession, and stood over his grave until he was buried. I was surprised by my boldness towards the Messenger of God, and God and His Messenger know best, but by God it was not long before the verse was revealed, *And never pray over any of them when he dies, nor stand at his graveside* (9:84). The Messenger of God did not pray over any hypocrite again, until God took him from us.'"'

Author's comments: When the Messenger of God says in the narration, 'so if I knew that by pleading more than seventy times for him, he would be forgiven, I would ask more than seventy times for him', this shows that he had indeed given up any hope of 'Abd Allāh b. Ubayy being forgiven. This shows that the statement 'I have been given a say in this, as I have been told, *plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times*' means that God has given him the choice between pleading for forgiveness or not pleading for forgiveness, not that he has any real say in the matter of whether God will forgive him, such that it can be concluded that his pleading forgiveness will have any impact on whether 'Abd Allāh b. Ubayy is forgiven or not.

From this, we can conclude that even if it is established that the Messenger of God asked forgiveness for 'Abd Allāh b. Ubayy, performed funerary prayers for him, and stood over his grave, none of that was done with the earnest intent of seeking forgiveness for him or supplicating on his behalf, as we shall see in the narration of al-Qummī. There is also a discussion to be had about these narrations, which we shall come to shortly.

(8) In the same source, Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrates from al-Sha'bī that 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb said, 'I once made an error in Islam the likes of which I have never made! The Messenger of God wanted to perform funerary prayers over the body of 'Abd Allāh b. Ubayy, so I tugged on his robe and said, "By God, God has not commanded you to do this! God has said, *whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness*

for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah shall never forgive them (9:80)." The Messenger of God replied, "My Lord has given me a choice in this, for he has said, *plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them*." The Messenger of God sat down at the edge of the grave, and people were telling the deceased's son, "O Ḥabbāb, do this" or "O Ḥabbāb, do that." The Messenger of God said, "Ḥabbāb is the name of Satan, you are ʿAbd Allāh."'

(9) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, concerning the verse, *whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them*, we read: 'It was revealed when the Messenger of God returned to Medina and ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy fell seriously ill. His son, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd Allāh was a believer, so he came to the Messenger of God as his father lay dying, and said, "O Messenger of God, may my father and mother be your ransom, surely if you do not come to my father it will be shameful for us." So the Messenger of God went to see him while the hypocrites were with him, and his son ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd Allāh said, "Pray for his forgiveness, pray for his forgiveness!"

'Then ʿUmar said, "O Messenger of God! Did God not prohibit you from praying over any of them or asking forgiveness on behalf of any of them?" The Messenger of God turned away from him, but he continued, so he said, "Woe to you! I have been given the choice, so I have chosen. Surely God says, *whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah shall never forgive them*!"

'When ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy died, his son came to the Messenger of God and said: "May my father and my mother be your ransom, O Messenger of God, would you come to his funeral?" So, the Messenger came to his funeral and stood over his grave. ʿUmar said to him, "O Messenger of God! Did Got not prohibit you from ever praying over one of them when they die or standing by their grave?" God's Messenger responded, "Woe to you! Do you even know what I said? I only said, 'O God, fill his grave with fire, fill his insides with fire, and send him to the Fire!'" And the Messenger of God was forced to say something that he had not wished disclosed.'

Author's comments: There is more to say about this narration. We will discuss it in the verses that follow.

Verses 81–96

These verses appear to be connected to the previous section of verses as they share a common purpose with them.

فَرِحَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ بِمَقْعَدِهِمْ خِلَافَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَكَرِهُوا أَنْ يُجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَالُوا لَا تَنْفِرُوا فِي الْحَرِّ ۗ قُلْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ أَشَدُّ حَرًّا ۚ لَوْ كَانُوا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

(9:81) ***Those who were left behind*** **(mukhallafūn)** ***exulted*** **(fariḥa)** ***for their sitting back*** **(maqʿad)** ***in disobedience of*** **(khilāf)** ***the Messenger of God, and were reluctant to strive with their possessions and persons in the way of God, and they said, 'Do not go forth in this heat.' Say, the fire of hell is severer in heat, should they understand.***

Faraḥ (to exult) and *surūr* (happiness) are the opposite of *ghamm* (grief), and these are states of the soul that can either be pleasurable or painful.

Mukhallafūn ('those who were left behind') is the passive participle of the verb *khalafa*, meaning 'to leave behind.'

Maqʿad is derived from the verb *qaʿada* ('to sit'), which is used figuratively here to denote the fact that they did not go forth to wage war.

Khilāf, like *mukhālafa*, is derived from the verb *khālafa*, meaning to disobey. It could also be used in the meaning of 'after', in a similar vein to the verse, *but then they would not have stayed after you but a little* (17:76). Now, we would have expected the Qur'an to use the construction *khilāfak* ('in disobedience of you'), as God is addressing the Prophet directly in these verses. However, it instead opts for *khilāfa Rasūl Allāh* to show that they are only exulting in the fact that they are disobeying God Almighty, as the Messenger's only duty is to convey His revelation.

Therefore, the meaning of this part of the verse is: 'Those who you left behind when you set off on your campaign exulted at the fact they had not gone forth with you, in disobedience of your commands—or, after you—and they were averse to striving in the way of God with their persons and possessions.

...and they said, 'Do not go forth in this heat': They directed these words to others in order to undermine the Prophet and thwart his efforts to mobilise people to fight. That is why God commands the Prophet to respond to them by saying, *the fire of hell is severer in heat*. In other words, even if you think sitting back from fighting will save you from the heat of this world, it will not save you from the heat of hellfire, which is even more severe, as trying to escape the first will cast you into the second. Then God adds the words, *should they understand* (law yafqahūn), in which the use of the particle *law* suggests that there is no hope of them understanding anything.

فَلْيَضْحَكُوا قَلِيلًا وَلْيَبْكُوا كَثِيرًا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

(9:82) ***So let them laugh a little and let them weep a lot as a requital for what they used to earn.***

This follows on from their holding back from striving in the way of God with their persons and possessions and their exulting in the fact that they have remained behind and evaded their divine and human duty, without which there can be no happiness for anyone in this life.

...as a requital for what they used to earn: In other words, they will laugh a little in this world, exulting in the fact they have shirked their duties, but they will weep a lot in the Hereafter in the fires of Hell, which are more severe in heat. Therefore, this condition of laughing a little but weeping a lot stems from the contents of the previous verse, which is their joy at sitting back from fighting and escaping the heat of this world only to end up in the heat of Hellfire.

Based on the above, the meaning of the verse is: 'Looking at what they have done and what they have earned, they should laugh and rejoice a little in this world, then weep and grieve abundantly in the Hereafter.' The use of the imperative for laughter and weeping is to signify the necessary causal relationship between their deeds and their just desserts.

Now, if one were to read the two imperatives in this verse, *let them laugh a little* and *let them weep a lot*, as an actual command from God that engendered a real moral duty, this is not in harmony with the phrase, *as a requital for what they used to earn*.

However, it is possible to read *let them laugh a little and let them weep a lot* as both referring to this world and, together, being the requital for their past deeds. After all, it is these deeds that led them to the illusory respite of those few days that they disobeyed the command of the Messenger of God

to go forth and fight, then to their humiliation and abasement in the eyes of God and the faithful for the rest of their lives in this world, and to a severe punishment in Hellfire in the next life.

فَإِنْ رَجَعَكَ اللَّهُ إِلَىٰ طَائِفَةٍ مِنْهُمْ فَاسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِلْخُرُوجِ فَقُلْ لَنْ تَخْرُجُوا مَعِيَ أَبَدًا وَلَنْ تُقَاتِلُوا مَعِيَ عَدُوًّا ۖ إِنَّكُمْ رَضِيتُمْ بِالْقُعُودِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَاقْعُدُوا مَعَ الْخَالِفِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

(9:83) ***If God brings you back to a group of them and they seek your permission to go forth, say, 'You shall never go forth with me, and you shall not fight with me against any enemy. You were indeed pleased to sit back the first time, so sit back with those who stay behind.'***

The phrase, *sit back the first time*, refers to their original refusal to go forth the first time the Prophet commanded them to do so. Based on the context of the verse, this is most likely a reference to the campaign to Tabūk.

As for *those who stay behind*, this is a reference to those who are generally not capable of fighting, such as women, children, the sick, and the lame. Some have read this as a reference to those who stay behind without a valid reason, while others have said that this refers to immoral people. The remainder of the verse's meaning is clear.

The phrase, *if God brings you back to a group of them*, this indicates that this verse and those it is connected to, both before and after it, were revealed after the Messenger of God had already set out on his journey and when he had returned to Medina, and that this was at the time of the Tabūk campaign.

وَلَا تُصَلِّ عَلَىٰ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ مَاتَ أَبَدًا وَلَا تَقُمْ عَلَىٰ قَبْرِهِ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

(9:84) ***And never pray over any of them when he dies, nor stand at his graveside. They indeed disbelieved in God and His Messenger and died as transgressors.***

This verse forbids the Prophet and the faithful from offering funeral prayers for the hypocrites or for standing beside their graves. The reason for this prohibition is that they disbelieved and transgressed and then died in a state of transgression. Equally, the Qur'an invoked their disbelief and

transgression to explain the futility of pleading to God for their forgiveness in the earlier verse, *Whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them*... (9:80), and also in the verse from Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn, *It is the same for them whether you plead for forgiveness for them, or do not plead for forgiveness for them: God will never forgive them. Indeed God does not guide the transgressing lot* (63:6).

From all of the above, it is clear that when a person loses their faith in God and allows their heart to be overcome and consumed by disbelief, this leaves no room for their salvation. These three verses, taken together, reveal the pointlessness and futility of asking God to forgive the hypocrites and of praying over their deceased or standing beside their graves to recite invocations for them.

وَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَأَوْلَادُهُمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

(9:85) ***Let not their possessions or their children impress you. God only desires to punish them with these in this world, and that their souls may depart while they are faithless.***

The meaning of this verse has already been explained in our commentary on the earlier similar verse of this chapter, *so let not their wealth and children impress you*... (9:55).

وَإِذَا أُنْزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَجَاهِدُوا مَعَ رَسُولِهِ اسْتَأْذَنَكَ أُولُو الطَّوْلِ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالُوا ذَرْنَا نَكُنْ مَعَ الْقَاعِدِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ رَضُوا بِأَنْ يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطُبِعَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

(9:86-87) ***When a chapter is sent down: 'Have faith in God, and strive along with His Messenger,' the affluent*** **(ūlū al-ṭawl)** ***among them ask you for leave, and say, 'Let us remain with those who sit back.' They are pleased to be with those who stay back*** **(khawālif)****, *and their hearts have been sealed. So they do not understand.***

The word *ūlū al-ṭawl* means those who possess power and blessings.
While *khawālif* denotes those who stay behind.
The remainder of the two verses' meanings are clear.

لَٰكِنِ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ جَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الْخَيْرَاتُ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

(9:88) ***But the Messenger and the faithful who are with him strive with their possessions and persons, and to such belong all the blessings*** **(al-khayrāt)*****, and it is they who are the felicitous.***

Having condemned the hypocrites for being satisfied to hang back and avoid fighting and for their hearts being sealed in the previous two verses, the Qur'an now turns to the Prophet and the believers who are with him. This, of course, is a reference to the truly faithful, whose hearts are free from the stain of hypocrisy—as shown by the fact that they are being contrasted with the hypocrites, who are only 'believers' in the sense that they outwardly belong to the community of the faithful. Here, the Qur'an praises them for striving with their possessions and their persons, meaning that they were not happy to sit back from fighting and their hearts were not sealed. On the contrary, they attained felicity in this world and a divine light to guide them on their way, as per the verse, *is he who was lifeless, then We gave him life and provided him with a light by which he walks among the people*... (6:1222).

That is why God concludes the verse by saying, *and to such belong all the blessings, and it is they who are the felicitous*. In other words, they shall have all good things—as indicated by the fact that the word *khayrāt* is plural and preceded by the definite article, *al*—including a good life, the light of divine guidance, martyrdom, and everything else that will bring them closer to their Lord, and they are the felicitous and successful ones.

أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٨٩﴾

(9:89) ***God has prepared*** **(aʿadd)** ***for them gardens with streams running in them, to remain in them. That is the great success.***

Note that in this verse God does not say that He has promised the faithful gardens. Rather, He says that He has prepared these gardens and made them ready for them. This is because the verse is looking at the outcomes and consequences of their deeds. If this was described as a promise, then it would be a promise to everyone who believed with the Prophet, and this would mean that it was incumbent on God to grant them these gardens whether they remained

true to their faith and righteous in their conduct or whether they changed and went astray later, for God does not break His promises.

However, this would be something that went against the principles of the Qur'anic world view and God-given human nature, as neither of these would assent to God guaranteeing paradise and forgiveness to someone because of one deed that they did and then leave them to do whatever they want after that.

This is why, when we study the Qur'an, we see that whenever God makes a promise, He makes it contingent on a general category, such as faith or righteous deeds that determine whether or not a person has earned that divine promise. What God does not do in the Qur'an is grant a promise to specific individuals, as this would bring about a contradiction between a person's moral duty and their knowledge that they had done something which guaranteed them paradise. See the verse, *God has promised the faithful, men and women, gardens…* (9:72), and *Muhammad, the Messenger of God, and those who are with him are hard against the faithless and merciful amongst themselves… God has promised those of them who have faith and do righteous deeds forgiveness and a great reward* (48:29).

وَجَاءَ الْمُعَذِّرُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ لِيُؤْذَنَ لَهُمْ وَقَعَدَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٠﴾

(9:90) ***Some of the Bedouins who sought to be excused came so that they may be granted leave; while those who lied to God and His Messenger sat back. Soon there shall visit the faithless among them a painful punishment.***

It appears that those '*who sought to be excused*' refers to those with genuine excuses not to fight, such as those who have no provisions or weapons. The evidence for this is the fact that those '*who sought to be excused*' are contrasted with '*those who lied to God and His Messenger*.' The context and tone of the verse show that the two groups are being compared to one another in order to expose the blameworthiness, vileness, and moral and spiritual corruption of the hypocrites. This is insofar as those Bedouins who had genuine excuses not to fight still came to seek leave from the Prophet to avoid fighting in response to the religious duty of striving in the way of God and coming to the aid of God and His Messenger, while the liars were utterly unaffected by it.

لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَاءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضَىٰ وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ مَا

يُنْفِقُونَ حَرَجٌ إِذَا نَصَحُوا لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۚ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ ۚ
وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٩١﴾

(9:91) ***There is no blame on the weak*** **(ḍuʿafāʾ)*****, nor on the sick*** **(marḍā)*****, nor on those who do not find anything to spend, so long as they are sincere to God and His Messenger. There is no blaming*** **(sabīl)** ***the virtuous, and God is all-forgiving, all-merciful.***

Based on the context of the verse, the *ḍuʿafāʾ* are those who are permanently incapable of fighting, such as those with chronic conditions, while the *marḍā* are those who are temporarily unable to fight because of an illness, and *those who do not find anything to spend* are those who are unable to fight because they lack the wealth, equipment, or resources to do so.

Therefore, all of these persons are excused from any hardship or difficulty—meaning religious obligation that would cause them unbearable difficulty or hardship were they to undertake it—just as any of those who wilfully disobey the obligation while being able to fulfil it are deemed worthy of blame and punishment.

Note that God has made excusing these persons from hardship contingent on the following condition: *so long as they are sincere to God and His Messenger*. This pertains to the blame and punishment of those who wilfully disobey and sit back, as this blame and punishment are only removed from those seeking to be excused so long as they are sincere to God and the Messenger. In other words, they should be free from all dishonesty and treachery, and they should not share the aims of the hypocrites who sat back from fighting in order to undermine the Prophet's mission, turn affairs against him, and corrupt the hearts of the members of the community of the faithful. If they are not free from these traits, then they share in the blame and punishment due to the hypocrites.

There is no blaming the virtuous: This provides the rationale for why there is no blame on any of the aforementioned groups of those excused from fighting so long as they are sincere to God and His Messenger. In other words, because they are sincere to God and His Messenger, they are virtuous, and there is no blaming the virtuous, so there is blaming them either, and they will suffer no punishment as a result.

The term *sabīl* literally means 'way', and it is used here in the context of blame and punishment to show that those who are genuinely excused from fighting are safe from any harm or penalty as a result. It is as if to say that they

are completely secure and there is no way for evil or harm to come to them. Moreover, the statement, *there is no blaming the virtuous*, appears to be a universal principle, even if it is being applied in this specific context.

وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ إِذَا مَا أَتَوْكَ لِتَحْمِلَهُمْ قُلْتَ لَا أَجِدُ مَا أَحْمِلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ
تَوَلَّوْا وَأَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ حَزَنًا أَلَّا يَجِدُوا مَا يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

(9:92) ***Nor on those who, when they came to you to provide them with a mount*** **(li-taḥmilahum)**, ***you said, 'I do not find any mount for you,' they turned back, their eyes flowing*** **(tafīḍ)** ***with tears, grieved*** **(ḥazanan)** ***because they did not find any means to spend.***

According to al-Ṭabrisī, writing in *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, the verb *taḥmil* means to provide someone with a mount in the form of a horse, a camel, or the like thereof. See, for example, the poem:

Is there not a young man with a pair of shoes / upon which to mount me (*yaḥmilunī*), for I am an old man on a journey?

The verb *tafīḍ* (flowing) means for something to overflow, as when a cup overflows with its contents, while *ḥuzn* (grief) denotes a pain experienced in one's heart because of some loss. It is derived from *ḥazn*, which refers to hard and rugged ground that is difficult to traverse.

The phrase, '*nor on those to whom...*' means that there is no blame '*on those who... turned back...*' and the phrases '*when they came to you... you said...*' are like the two parts of a conditional statement ('if/when... then...') and, taken together, are an adverb for '*turned back*,' while '*grieved*' is an object of cause (*mafʿūl lah*), meaning they turned away because they were grieved.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is as follows: 'Nor is there any blame on the poor who, when they came to you for you to provide them with a mount to ride and the other necessary provisions and equipment for battle, you told them, "I cannot find any mount for you", and they turned away, their eyes overflowing with tears because of their grief that they could not find anything to spend in the way of God or to wage war against His enemies.'

Note that this group are appended to the three mentioned above—the weak, the sick, and those who do not find anything to spend—not as a fourth category, but as a specific sub-category of *those who do not find anything to spend*. They are singled out for mention in this way to show God's special consideration for them, as they are even more sincere and virtuous than the others mentioned.

إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ وَهُمْ أَغْنِيَاءُ ۚ رَضُوا بِأَنْ يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

(9:93) ***The blame lies only on those who ask leave of you though they are well-off. They are pleased to be with those who stay back; God has set a seal on their hearts, so they do not know.***

The meaning of this verse is clear.

يَعْتَذِرُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ ۚ قُلْ لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكُمْ قَدْ نَبَّأَنَا اللَّهُ مِنْ أَخْبَارِكُمْ ۚ وَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾

(9:94) ***They will offer you excuses when you return to them. Say, 'Do not make excuses; we will never believe you*** **(lan nu'mina lakum).** ***God has informed us of your state of affairs. God and His Messenger will observe your conduct, then you will be returned to the Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, and He will inform you concerning what you used to do.'***

Note that the pronoun 'you' in this verse is plural, showing that it refers to both the Prophet and the faithful together.

'*...we will never believe you*'—meaning we will never believe the excuses you offer, as indicated by the fact that the verb *nu'mina* ('believe') is given the preposition *la* in the sense of 'to believe in' someone. Alternatively, it could be read as meaning, 'we will never believe you in a way that is favorable to you', in which case the *la* indicates 'for you' (i.e. 'in your favour'). The phrase, '*we will never believe you*', explains why the Prophet and the faithful tell the hypocrites not to make excuses. Meanwhile, the phrase, '*God has informed us of your state of affairs*', explains why they will never believe them.

Therefore, the meaning of this verse is as follows: 'The hypocrites will offer you excuses when you return to them from the battlefront. Tell them, O Muḥammad: "Do not make excuses to us, because we will never believe what you say, for God has already made us aware of the hypocrisy and deceit that you have displayed in these excuses. The true nature of your actions will soon be revealed, and it is already evident to God and His Messenger. Then, on the Day of Judgement, you will return to God, who knows the apparent

and the unseen, and He will inform you of the reality of your deeds.'"

The significance of the phrase, '*God and His Messenger will observe your conduct*', will become apparent shortly.

سَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ إِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ لِتُعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ ۖ فَأَعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ رِجْسٌ ۖ وَمَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

(9:95) ***They will swear to you by God, when you return to them, that you may leave them alone. So leave them alone. They are indeed filth, and their refuge shall be hell, a requital for what they used to earn.***

In other words, when they come to offer their excuses, turn away from them and do not expend your energy blaming them and rebuking them. This is not because you accept their oaths or excuses, on the contrary, it is because they are unclean, and you should avoid them. Their final abode will be Hell, which is a fitting recompense for their deeds in this life.

يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ لِتَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ ۖ فَإِنْ تَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَرْضَىٰ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٩٦﴾

(9:96) ***They swear to you that you may be reconciled to them. But even if you are reconciled to them God shall not be reconciled to the transgressing lot.***

The previous verse says that the hypocrites swear oaths in order to escape your rebuke and condemnation. This verse says that they swear oaths in order to win you over and make you pleased with them. However, you should disregard these oaths and turn away from them because they are unclean, and you should not sully the purity and sanctity of your faith with the stain of their hypocrisy, deceit, faithlessness, and transgression. Equally, even if their oaths win you over, they will never win God over, because they are transgressors and God is never pleased with those who transgress.

The meaning of this verse, then, is that if you reconcile with them, then you have reconciled yourself to something that God will never be reconciled with. In other words, you will be pleased with something that is displeasing to God, and a believer should never be pleased with something that angers his Lord. This is an extremely eloquent way of subtly prohibiting the faithful

from ever being reconciled with the hypocrites.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, concerning the verse, *Those who were left behind exulted for their sitting back* (9:81), it is narrated by Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad, from his father: 'The expedition to Tabūk was the last of the Messenger of God's military expeditions, and it took place in the hot months, [about which the hypocrites said,] "*do not go forth in this heat*", and it was a difficult campaign.'

(2) From the same source, it is narrated from Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Ibn Mardawayh from Ibn ʿAbbās: 'The Messenger of God commanded people to go forth with him—and this was during the summer—so some men said, "O Messenger of God, the heat is most severe and we cannot go forth, so do not go out in this heat!" God responded with the verse, *Say, the fire of hell is severer in heat, should they understand*, and commanded him to go forth.'

Author's comments: The apparent meaning of the verse suggests that the hypocrites only said this in order to discourage people from going forth with the Prophet, while the apparent meaning of these traditions suggests that they said this as advice. Therefore the verses and the traditions do not accord with one another.

(3) In the same source, Ibn Jarīr narrates from Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Qaraẓī and others: 'The Messenger of God set out during a time of intense heat for Tabūk, so a man of the Banū Salama tribe said: "Do not go forth in this heat!" In response, God revealed the verse, "*Say, the fire of hell is severer in heat.*"'

Author's comments: We have already seen in the reports concerning the verse, *Give me leave, and do not put me to temptation* (9:49), that the one who said, *Do not go forth in this heat* (9:81) was Jadd b. Qays.

(4) Also in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, concerning the verse, *And never pray over any of them when he dies* (9:84), it is narrated from al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Mundhir, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in his *Dalā'il* from Ibn ʿUmar: 'When ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl died, his son ʿAbd Allāh came to the Messenger of God and asked him to give him his shirt as a funeral shroud for his father, and he gave it to him. Then he asked him to pray over him, so the Messenger of God got up to pray, but then ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb stood up, grabbed his robe, and said, "O Messenger of

God, will you pray over him while God has forbidden you to pray over the hypocrites?" He said, "My Lord has given me a choice in this, for He says, *whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times, God shall never forgive them*, and I will plead more than seventy times for him." ʿUmar replied, "But he is a hypocrite!" But the Prophet prayed over him anyway. Then God sent down the verse, *and never pray over any of them when he dies, nor stand at his graveside*, after which he no longer prayed over them.'

Author's comments: There are other narrations with the same meaning that have come down via various collections of traditions and narrators of reports from ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Jābir, and Qatāda. Some of them say that the Prophet shrouded ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy with his shirt, recited supplications upon his corpse, and even got into his grave.

(5) In the same source, it is narrated from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Naḥḥās, Ibn Ḥibbān, Ibn Mardawayh, and Abū Naʿīm's *Ḥilya* from Ibn ʿAbbās: 'I heard ʿUmar say, "When ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy died, the Messenger of God was asked to recite the funeral prayers over him, so he got up to pray, but when he stood up, I said, 'Will you pray over the enemy of God, ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy, who said such-and-such and such-and-such?'—and I counted out his deeds. The Messenger of God kept smiling until I had gone on for a while, then said, 'O ʿUmar, leave me be, for I have been given a say in this, as I have been told, *plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times* (9:80), so if I knew that by pleading more than seventy times for him, he would be forgiven, I would ask more than seventy times for him!'

'"Then the Messenger of God offered prayers over him, walked with his procession, and stood over his grave until he was buried. I was surprised by my boldness towards the Messenger of God, and God and His Messenger know best, but by God it was not long before the verse was revealed, *And never pray over any of them when he dies, nor stand at his graveside* (9:84). The Messenger of God did not pray over any hypocrite again, until God took him from us."'

(6) In the same source, Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrates from al-Shaʿbī that ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb said, 'I once made an error in Islam the likes of which I have never made! The Messenger of God wanted to perform funerary

prayers over the body of ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy, so I tugged on his robe and said, "By God, God has not commanded you to do this! God has said, *whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times, God shall never forgive them* (9:80)." The Messenger of God replied, "My Lord has given me a choice in this, for he has said, *plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them*." The Messenger of God sat down at the edge of the grave, and people were telling the deceased's son, "O Ḥabbāb, do this" or "O Ḥabbāb, do that." The Messenger of God said, "Ḥabbāb is the name of Satan, you are ʿAbd Allāh."'

(7) In the same source, al-Ṭabarānī, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in *Dalā'il* narrate from Ibn ʿAbbās that ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy told his son, 'Bring me a robe of the Prophet, shroud me in it, and tell him to pray over me.' So his son went to him and said, 'O Messenger of God, you know the dignity of ʿAbd Allāh—he is asking that you give me one of your robes so that we can shroud him in it for burial and that you recite the funeral prayers over his body.'

ʿUmar interjected, 'O Messenger of God, you know ʿAbd Allāh and his hypocrisy well! Will you pray over him while God has forbidden you from doing so?'

The Prophet answered him, 'Where has he forbidden me from doing so?'

He recited the verse, *whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times, God shall never forgive them*!

The Prophet said, 'I will plead for his forgiveness more than seventy times!'

Then God sent down the verse, *And never pray over any of them when he dies, nor stand at his graveside*.

Upon receiving this revelation, the Prophet sent word to ʿUmar informing him of this, then God sent down the verse, *it is the same for them whether you plead for forgiveness for them, or do not plead for forgiveness for them* (63:7).

Author's comments: Accounts of the Prophet supplicating to God for the forgiveness of ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy and performing the funeral prayers over his body also appear in some Shīʿī narrations with incomplete chains of transmission, which are reported by al-ʿAyyāshī and al-Qummī in their commentaries. We have discussed the report of al-Qummī already.

However, these narrations contradict one another in their details and are plainly at odds with the meanings of the verses that they purport to explain.

First of all, consider the verse: *Whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times, God shall never forgive them* (9:80). From its apparent meaning, it is evident that this verse intends to convey the futility of seeking forgiveness for the hypocrites rather than to suggest that the Prophet has a choice whether to seek forgiveness for them or not. It is equally evident that the number seventy is mentioned purely to convey a large quantity rather than there being anything special about the number seventy itself, so there is no reason to suppose that pleading more than seventy times for their forgiveness would yield a different result.

Equally, it does not befit the status of the Prophet to be ignorant of the meaning of this verse in the manner that these narrations portray: interpreting it as offering him the choice to pray for the hypocrites or not and saying that he will plead for their forgiveness more than seventy times, persisting in this ignorance until God sends down a verse to explicitly forbid him from praying over them or performing other acts on their behalf.

All of these verses are concerned with asking God to forgive the hypocrites and performing funeral prayers over their bodies: *Whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them...* (9:80); *It is the same for them whether you plead for forgiveness for them, or do not plead for forgiveness for them...* (63:7); *And never pray over any of them when he dies, nor stand at his graveside* (9:84).

Furthermore, all of these verses explain the futility of praying for them in terms of their disbelief in and transgressions against God. See also the verse forbidding the Prophet and the faithful for seeking forgiveness for the idolaters that appears later in this same chapter: *The Prophet and the faithful may not plead for the forgiveness of the polytheists, even if they should be relatives, after it has become clear to them that they will be the inmates of hell* (9:113). This verse also explains the prohibition on seeking forgiveness for them in terms of their disbelief and consignment to hell, so how could the Prophet possibly imagine that it was permitted to seek forgiveness for them or pray over them when they were deceased?

Second, from the context and tone of these verses—particularly *and never pray over any of them when he dies, nor stand at his graveside*—it is clear that they were revealed during the Prophet's expedition to Tabūk and his return to Medina. This was in the year 8 A.H., but it is a well-established historical

fact that ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy died one year later, in 9 A.H., which means that these verses could not have possibly been revealed about his death and funeral arrangements.

This flatly rules out the claim found in these narrations, that the Prophet prayed over the corpse of ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy and stood beside his grave and that God sent down the verse, *and never pray over any of them when he dies, nor stand at his graveside*, in response to this.

More problematic than this is the detail in some narrations that ʿUmar told the Prophet, 'Will you pray over him when you have been forbidden to pray over the hypocrites?' and the Prophet responded, 'Surely my Lord has given me a choice in this matter,' only for God to reveal the verse, *and never pray over any of them when he dies*...

And even more problematic still is what we read in the final narration quoted above, namely that this was the occasion for the revelation of the verse, *It is the same for them whether you plead for forgiveness for them, or do not plead for forgiveness for them* (63:7). However, this verse is found in Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn, which was revealed after the expedition against the Banū Muṣṭaliq tribe, in the year 5 A.H., when ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy was still very much alive. In fact, he is quoted in this chapter of the Qur'an as saying, *When we return to the city, the mighty will surely expel the abased from it* (63:8).

At the same time, a detail supporters of these narrations have clung to, which is found in some of them, is that the Prophet only pleaded for the forgiveness of ʿAbd Allāh b. Ubayy and offered prayers over his body in order to win the hearts of some of the hypocrites in the Khazraj tribe over to Islam. But how can this be right? How can the Prophet disobey the explicit command from God found in these verses in order to win the hearts and minds of the hypocrites? In fact, God delivered a forceful warning against doing exactly this, when He said, *Then We would have surely made you taste a double punishment in this life and a double punishment after death* (17:75). Therefore, it seems apparent that these narrations are fabrications and, as such, should be set aside, because they explicitly contradict the Book of God.

(8) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, about the verse, *They are pleased to be with those who stay back* (9:87), it is narrated by Ibn Mardawayh from Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib set off with the Prophet towards Tabūk until he came to Thaniyyat al-Wadāʿ. There, ʿAlī wept and asked, 'You are leaving me behind with those who stay back?' The Messenger of God answered him, 'Are you not pleased to be in the same position with me as Aaron had with Moses, except for

prophethood?'

Author's comments: This tradition is narrated by numerous chains of transmission in both Sunnī and Shīʿī collections.

(9) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Jābir, from Imām al-Bāqir, concerning the verse, *They are pleased to be with those who stay back*: 'It means with the womenfolk.'

(10) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is narrated from ʿAbd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf*, Ibn Abī Shayba, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, Abū al-Shaykh, and Ibn Mardawayh, from Anas, that when the Messenger of God was returning from the expedition to Tabūk and approached Medina, he said, 'There were men who you left behind in Medina, but you did not follow a path, nor spend on provisions, nor traverse a valley, save that they were with you in that.'

The people said, 'O Messenger of God? How could they be with us while they were in Medina?'

He answered, 'They were detained there by some valid excuse.'

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, concerning the verses, *there is no blame on the weak, nor on the sick... nor on those who, when they came to you to provide them with a mount...* (9:91–2), we read that the first verse was revealed about ʿAbd Allāh b. Zā'ida, also known as Ibn Umm Maktūm, who suffered from blindness. He came to the Messenger of God and said, 'O Prophet of God! I am a blind, frail, emaciated old man, and I have no guide, will you excuse me from participating in this campaign?' The Prophet remained silent, but then God sent down this verse. This is transmitted from al-Ḍaḥḥāk. Others have said this verse was revealed about ʿĀ'idh b. ʿAmr and his associates. This is transmitted from Qatāda.

On the other hand, the second verse was revealed about 'the weepers' (*al-bakkā'īn*), and they numbered seven persons, including ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Kaʿb, ʿUlba b. Zayd, and ʿAmr b. Thaʿlaba b. Ghanama from the Banū al-Najjār tribe, and Sālim b. ʿUmayr, Haramī b. ʿAbd Allāh, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr b. ʿAwf, and ʿAbd Allāh b. Mughaffal b. Mazīna. They came to the Messenger of God and said, 'O Messenger of God, provide us with mounts, for we have nothing to go forth with you upon.' He said, 'I have no mounts to give you.' This is narrated from Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī.

Some have said that these seven individuals were from various tribes. They came to the Prophet and said: 'Provide us with shoes and

sandals.' This is narrated from Muḥammad b. Kaʿb and Ibn Isḥāq. Others have said that this group were from the Mazīna tribe. This is narrated from Mujāhid. Still others have said that these seven were poor members of the Helpers, and when they wept, ʿUthmān provided two of them with mounts, ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib provided a further two with mounts, and Yāmīn b. Kaʿb al-Naḍarī provided three of them with mounts. This is narrated from al-Wāqidī. He says: 'There were thirty thousand men with the Messenger of God at Tabūk, ten of whom were mounted on horseback.'

Author's comments: There are major disagreements between different narrations on the identity of those who wept.

(11) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, we read that these weepers had actually come to the Prophet and asked him for shoes to wear.

(12) In *Maʿānī al-akhbār*, al-Ṣadūq narrates from Thaʿlaba, from some of his associates, from Imām al-Ṣādiq, about the verse, *the Knower of the sensible and the Unseen*: 'The Unseen is what has yet to be, the sensible is what has already been.'

Author's comments: This tradition is a case of the Imām providing some examples of the meaning of the verse. However, the terms themselves are broader than this.

(13) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, we read: 'When the Prophet approached Medina following the expedition to Tabūk and his companions were rebuking and harassing the hypocrites, God revealed the verses, *They will swear to you by God, when you return to them, that you may leave them alone... They swear to you that you may be reconciled to them...* (9:95–96).

(14) In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, we read that these verses were revealed about Jadd b. Qays, Muʿattib b. Qushayr and their fellow hypocrites. There were eighty of them in total. When the Prophet approached Medina on his return from Tabūk, he said: 'Do not sit with them and do not speak with them.' This is narrated from Ibn al-ʿAbbās.

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Verses 97–106

This section of verses continues in the same vein as the previous one, now turning to address the state of the Bedouins, speaking about their disbelief and hypocrisy, but also their faith. This section also contains the Verse of Charity (*Āyat al-Ṣadaqa*).

الْأَعْرَابُ أَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَنِفَاقًا وَأَجْدَرُ أَلَّا يَعْلَمُوا حُدُودَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٩٧﴾

(9:97) *The Bedouins* (A῾rāb) *are more obdurate in unfaith and hypocrisy, and more apt to be ignorant of the precepts that God has sent down to His Messenger, and God is all-knowing, all-wise.*

In his *Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī writes: 'The Arabs are the descendants of Ishmael, and the term *A῾rāb* ("Bedouins") is the plural form of *῾Arab*. Over time, however, this plural came to denote the desert-dwellers. See the verses: *The Bedouins say, "We have faith"* (49:14); *The Bedouins are more obdurate in unfaith and hypocrisy* (9:97); *Yet among the Bedouins are those who believe in God and the Last Day* (9:99).

Some have said that the plural of *A῾rāb* is *A῾ārīb*. See, for example, the verses of poetry:

Bedouins (*A῾ārīb*) proud of falsehood / and eloquent in speech

In everyday parlance, the term *A῾rābī* (sing. 'Bedouin') denotes a desert-dweller, while *῾Arabī* signifies proper speech, while *i῾rāb* means explanation.'

In this verse, God addresses the condition of the desert-dwellers, saying that they are worse in disbelief and hypocrisy because they live far from Medina and from urban society. This isolation also means that they are also more deprived of humanistic blessings such as knowledge and morals. Therefore, it is only to be expected that they are ignorant of the bounds of what God has sent down in the form of divine teachings and religious ordinances concerning duties, practices, and permitted and prohibited things.

وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَيَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمُ الدَّوَائِرَ ۚ عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٨﴾

(9:98) ***Among the Bedouins are those who regard what they spend as a loss*** **(maghram)*****, and they watch for a reversal of your fortunes*** **(dawā'ir)*****. Theirs shall be an adverse turn of fortune, and God is all-hearing, all-knowing.***

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, we read: '*Maghram* ("loss") refers to a misfortune that affects one's wealth without there being any underhandedness involved. The root meaning of *gharām* (of which *maghram* is a cognate) is "something bound to happen." For example, see the verse, *indeed its punishment is enduring* (*gharāman*), or the saying that love is *gharām* ("inescapable"). The cognate *gharīm* denotes both parties in a loan agreement, because each is bound to the other. Therefore, the verb *gharama* can be used to signify the existence of a financial obligation between one party and another.'

Dawā'ir is the plural of *dā'ira* ('reversal'), which can refer to any significant event, but is typically employed to denote misfortunes and calamities. It is derived from the root *d-w-r*, meaning 'to circulate', as though such misfortunes circulate amongst people and each day a different people are afflicted by something. Therefore, when God says that the Bedouins are watching for a reversal of the faithful's fortunes, it means they are awaiting some calamity or misfortune to befall them so that they can free themselves from their authority and return to their idolatrous and erroneous customs.

...who regard what they spend as a loss—meaning they think of spending in the way of God as a waste of money. According to some commentators, this is referring not only to money spent for *jihād* but on any good cause. It could also be referring to money spent in the form of charities, which would make this verse a prelude to the discussion of collecting charities from the Bedouin's wealth that occurs in a few verses' time. This reading is supported by the content of the following verse, *and regard what they spend as nearness to God and the blessings of the Messenger* (9:99), and it looks like a prelude to the part of the verse that reads, *and bless them. Indeed your blessing is a comfort to them* (9:103).

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is as follows: 'There are desert-dwellers who think that way they spend in the way of goodness—or what they give as charity—is a loss and a forfeiture. They are awaiting for some misfortune to befall you. However, it is they who shall suffer misfortune—this can be read either as a divine decree or an imprecation—and God hears what they say and knows the contents of their hearts.'

وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ قُرُبَاتٍ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَصَلَوَاتِ الرَّسُولِ ۚ أَلَا إِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَهُمْ ۚ سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٩٩﴾

(9:99) ***Yet among the Bedouins are those who believe in God and the Last Day, and regard what they spend as nearness to God and the blessings of the Messenger. Look! It shall indeed bring them nearness, and God will admit them into His mercy. Indeed God is all-forgiving, all-merciful.***

It seems that the phrase, *the blessings of the Messenger*, is joined to the statement, *what they spend*, and the pronoun '*it*' in *It shall bring them nearness* refers jointly to *what they spend* and *the blessings of the Messenger*.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'There are desert-dwellers who believe in God and in His monotheism, without associating partners with Him. They also believe in the Last Day, and in being held accountable for their deeds and recompensed for them. Therefore, they see spending their wealth in the way of God and the blessings and prayers of the Messenger that this engenders as a source of nearness to God for them. Furthermore God promises them that He will admit them to His mercy, because He is all-forgiving of sins, most merciful to the faithful and those who obey Him.

وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتَهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

(9:100) ***The early vanguard*** **(al-sābiqūn al-awwalūn)** ***of the Emigrants*** **(Muhājirīn)** ***and the Helpers*** **(Anṣār)** ***and those who followed them in virtue—God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens with streams running in them, to remain in them forever. That is the great success.***

The standard recitation (*qirā'a*) of this verse is that '*the Helpers'* takes a *kasra* (-i) as its final vowel because it is joined to '*the Emigrants*.' This means 'the early vanguard of the Emigrants and the early vanguard of the Helpers and those who followed them in virtue...' An alternative recitation from Ya'qūb

sees the word Helpers take a *ḍamma* (-u), which would indicate that it refers to all of the Helpers and not only 'the early vanguard' of them.

There is some disagreement about the meaning of *al-sābiqūn al-awwalūn* in this verse. Some have said this refers to those who had converted to Islam early enough to have offered prays towards both Jerusalem and Mecca. Others have said it refers to those who were present at the Pledge of Ḥudaybiyya. Still others have said it refers specifically to those who fought at the Battle of Badr. Then there are those who say it refers to those who converted to Islam before the Emigration to Medina. However, none of these interpretations find strong support in the wording of the verse itself.

What the wording of the verse suggests, however, is that the term *sābiqūn awwalūn*—which uses two adjectives to describe this group of believers without specifically identifying them—refers to the Emigration and fighting for the Prophet, and it is these two traits that make them the 'early vanguard.'

Then, the phrase that follows this, namely, *and those who followed them in virtue*, introduces another group, identified by the fact that they followed the first group and that they did so virtuously. Now, when God describes them as followers, this links them to the first of the two previously mentioned adjectives—*sābiqūn* ('vanguard')—as one does not speak of 'the early and the followers', but rather 'the vanguard and the followers.' This is confirmed by the verses, *for the poor Emigrants who have been expelled from their homes and [wrested of] their possessions... and for those who were settled in the land and [abided] in faith before them... And [also for] those who came in after them, who say, 'Our Lord, forgive us and our brethren who were our forerunners in the faith...'* (59:8–10).

Therefore, the meaning of 'vanguard' (*sābiqūn*) here are those Muslims who hastened to faith from the dawn of Islam until the Day of Judgement.

However, the idea of some going ahead and that of others following them are relational concepts. Therefore the Muslims of each era are—relatively speaking—'ahead' of those who come after them in subsequent eras, just as they are 'following' those who have gone ahead of them in earlier eras. Therefore, God uses the adjective *awwalūn* ('early') to show that these are the very first generation of them.

Therefore, God describes the third of the three classes as *those who followed them in virtue*. Note that He does not limit *those who followed them* to any particular age or generation, nor does he describe them as 'going ahead', being 'first', or the like thereof. This means that the phrase is general and encompasses all of those who follow *the early vanguard*. Therefore, according

to this verse, all of the believers who are not hypocrites from the dawn of Islam until the Day of Judgement fall into three classes: The early vanguard from the Emigrants, the early vanguard from the Helpers, and those who followed them in virtue. The first two classes are not described as following anyone else; they are the ones being followed by everyone else, whereas the third category are only followed in relative terms, as we have already discussed.

This analysis is the best evidence for the fact that *the early vanguard* refers to those who laid the foundations of the religion and raised its supports before its edifice was erected and its flags were held high. Some of these were the ones who believed and joined the Prophet, who endured harassment and persecution, who left behind their homes and possessions when they emigrated to Ethiopia and Medina; others were the ones who believed in the Prophet and came to his aid, who granted him and those believers who emigrated with him to their city shelter, and defended the religion before it was powerful and triumphant.

This applies to all of those who believed in the Prophet before he emigrated to Medina and all of those who emigrated to Medina with him before the Battle of Badr, as this marked the beginning of Islam's triumph over faithlessness; and to those who believed in the Prophet, sheltered him, and were prepared to fight for him when he emigrated to Medina.

As for the third group, *and those who followed them in virtue*, they are distinguished by the fact that the followed the early vanguard in virtue. When the verse says, '*in virtue*', this does not mean that those being followed were virtuous and then those who followed them followed their example and imitated them in virtue. It also does not mean that they followed them by way of virtue or because of virtue. Instead, what we notice is that the word 'virtue' (*iḥsān*) in this verse appears indefinite. What this suggests is that they followed them with virtue, meaning that the way in which they followed them was virtuous.

When we read the Qur'an, we see that God does not blame anyone for following anyone else except when this is done out of ignorance or prejudice—as is the case with the idolaters following their forefathers or the People of the Book following their monks, scribes, and forebears out of their own desires—or when they follow their own whims or follow the Devil. Whoever follows any of these things has followed wickedly. On the other hand, whoever follows the truth not on the basis of their own whims or prejudices has followed virtuously. That is why God says, *who listen to the word and follow the best of it. They are the ones whom God has guided, and it is they who possess intellect* (39:18). Part of following virtuously is that the follower ensures their actions

correspond fully to those of what they are following. By contrast, failing to do this is another example of following wickedly.

Therefore, the apparent meaning of the phrase, *and those who followed them in virtue*, is that they followed them in a virtuous manner, namely that they followed them in the truth—in other words, they followed them because the truth was with them—which is the same as following the truth directly. This is the opposite of following them because of one's own whims or because of some benefit one wishes to derive from them or from following them. The same is true of imitating their actions.

This is what the apparent meaning of the verse conveys about the idea 'following in virtue.' Some have suggested that it means to follow them and to be virtuous, namely that the follower should follow them with good deeds and righteous acts. However, this reading is not in keeping with the Arabic of the verse, in which the word '*virtue*' is kept indefinite (without the use of *al-*), which points to a specific kind of virtuousness. Moreover, even if we accept that this is the intended meaning of the verse, it can only be understood in the sense that this is part and parcel of following the truth for the sake of the truth, which naturally entails the performance of good and righteous deeds. However, doing good deeds does not necessarily entail following the truth, as is self-evident.

In short, then, the verse reduces the true believers within the community of the faithful to three groups: The first two groups are the early vanguard of the Emigrants and the Helpers, while the third group are those who followed them in virtue.

Based on the above, the following becomes evident:

First, that the verse praises the first two categories for being the first to believe and the foremost in championing the religion and laying its foundations. The context and tone of the verse make it clear that they have superiority over all others.

Second, that the use of the preposition '*of*' (min) in the phrase, *of the Emigrants and the Helpers* is used in the sense of division (*tabʿīḍ*) rather than exposition (*bayān*)—meaning that 'some of' the Emigrants and Helpers are *the early vanguard*, rather than all of them. This is based on the superiority the verse assigns to them and the fact that it says that God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, while the Qur'an itself also mentions that there are Emigrants and Helpers who have a sickness in their hearts, that there others who are spies for the hypocrites, and others still whom it describes as transgressors, and there are also those whose behavior the Prophet disavowed. It is

meaningless to say that God is pleased with such people, for God will never be pleased with transgressors.

Third, when the verse speaks about the superiority of this group and God being pleased with them, its context shows that this is contingent upon their having faith and doing righteous deeds. After all, the verse is praising the believers in the same context as the hypocrites are being criticized for their disbelief and evil conduct. This means that wherever God praises the faithful, mentions them in a good way, or promises them a beautiful reward, all of this is contingent upon their faith and righteous deeds. For example, consider the following verse: *...for the poor Emigrants who have been expelled from their homes and [wrested of] their possessions, who seek grace from God and [His] pleasure and help God and His Apostle. It is they who are the truthful* (59:8), and the three that come after it.

Or the verse in which He relates the supplication of the angels for the believers: *and they plead for forgiveness for the faithful: 'Our Lord! You comprehend all things in mercy and knowledge. So forgive those who repent and follow Your way and save them from the punishment of hell. Our Lord! Admit them into the Gardens of Eden, which You have promised them, along with whoever is righteous among their forebears, their spouses and their descendants...'* (40:7–8).

Or the verse: *Muhammad, the Messenger of God, and those who are with him are hard against the faithless and merciful amongst themselves... God has promised those of them who have faith and do righteous deeds forgiveness and a great reward* (48:29).

Or the verse: *The faithful and their descendants who followed them in faith—We will make their descendants join them, and We will not stint anything from their deeds. Every man is a hostage to what he has earned* (52:21). Note in this verse particularly the phrases '*in faith*' and '*every man*.'

Now, if the statement in the present verse was not qualified by the conditions of faith and righteous conduct, and these persons had God's pleasure and forgiveness regardless of whether their conduct was virtuous or not and whether they were pious or dissolute, this would explicitly contradict the verses, *God shall not be reconciled to the transgressing lot* (9:96); *and God does not guide the transgressing lot* (9:80); *and God does not like the wrongdoers* (3:57), along with the many other verses of the Qur'an that state directly or indirectly that God is never pleased with wrongdoers or transgressors or anyone who does not obey His commands and prohibitions. Moreover, none of these verses are phrased in a way that admits qualification or abrogation. The same is true of what God says directly to the believers: *It will be neither after*

your hopes nor the hopes of the People of the Book: whoever commits evil shall be requited for it (4:123).

Therefore, the absence of any qualification in this verse would mean qualifying all of the other verses—and these are many indeed—that deal with divine recompense or contain threats and warnings of punishment. To qualify all of these verses in this way would completely undermine the system of divine reward and punishment, which, in turn, would render the majority of religious rulings and ordinances futile, and, by extension, invalidate the divine wisdom in sending down revelation to humankind. This would also render the distinction we made above concerning the preposition '*of*' between division and exposition moot as, in this case, it obviously would not matter whether some of the Emigrants and Helpers were superior in status and recipients of God's forgiveness or whether all of them were.

God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him: To be pleased with something (*al-riḍā*) means that our hearts find an action agreeable without feeling any internal conflict or contradiction about this. When a person is pleased with something, this means they consent to it and do not refuse it. Someone is pleased with something so long as they do not actively dislike it, but this does not mean that they like it either. It is possible they feel neither like nor dislike towards it. Therefore, God's servant is pleased with Him so long as He does not dislike anything that God wishes or like anything that God detests. And one can only be pleased with God in this sense if they are pleased with His decree (*qadā'*) and His actions as they become manifest in the cosmos, and equally with His ordinances and will as expressed through the promulgation of His religion. In other words, if a person submits to God's cosmic and moral will, then this is submission and surrender to God.

This is yet another piece of evidence that the praise and reward given in this verse is contingent upon faith and righteous conduct, in the sense that God only praises the Emigrants, the Helpers, and the Followers so long as they believe in Him and act righteously. The verse says that He is pleased with such persons and has prepared for them gardens in the Hereafter beneath which rivers flow.

Therefore, the verse should not be understood as indicating that God is automatically pleased with anyone who can be called an Emigrant, a Helper, or a Follower, as this would mean that once God is pleased with someone He can never be displeased by them again, and that He owes them forgiveness and paradise regardless of how they behave thereafter, whether righteously or wickedly, piously or dissolutely.

Then, what does it mean to say that God is pleased with someone? When God is described as being pleased, this is an attribute of action (*ṣifat al-fiʿl*) rather than an attribute of essence (*ṣifat al-dhāt*). This is because if it was an attribute of essence, this would expose the Divine Essence to changeability or alteration in the event that a person who God was pleased with earned His wrath by disobeying Him, or that a person with whom God was displeased with earned His pleasure by repenting to Him. Therefore, when we say that God is pleased or displeased with someone, we are referring to how He treats them: When God is pleased with someone, this means He treats them in the manner of one who is pleased by admitting them to His mercy and sending down blessings upon them. Equally, when God is displeased with someone, He treats them in the manner of one who is displeased by denying them his mercy and submitting them to tribulation and adversity.

Therefore, it is possible that God could be pleased with someone only to become displeased with them at some future point, or vice versa. However, the context of the verse suggests that when it describes God as being pleased with them, this is a kind of pleasure after which there is no anger or wrath. This is because it is speaking about the character of the very best members of the Muslim community from both earlier and later generations, who have faith and do righteous deeds. Therefore, this is not referring to a specific group of people at a specific time such that we can conceive of God becoming displeased with them at a later date, because this is not something related to time. This is in contrast to the verse about the pledge given at Ḥudaybiyya, in which God says, *God was certainly pleased with the faithful when they swore allegiance to you under the tree* (48:18). Note that in this verse, God's pleasure is qualified by a specific time. Therefore, it is conceivable that God could become displeased with some of the persons this verse refers to at a later time.

وَمِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مُنَافِقُونَ ۖ وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ ۖ مَرَدُوا عَلَى
النِّفَاقِ لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ ۖ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ ۚ سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَذَابٍ
عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

(9:101) ***There are hypocrites among the Bedouins around*** **(ḥawl)** ***you and among the townspeople of Medina, steeped*** **(maradū)** ***in hypocrisy. You do not know them; We know them, and We will punish them twice, then they shall be consigned to a great punishment.***

When one thing is described as being 'around' (*ḥawl*) another, this means that it is adjacent to it on a number of sides and contains it.

Maradū means to be recalcitrant or disobedient, and to persistently practice evil deeds. Hence, when the verse says that they are *steeped in hypocrisy*, this means that they repeatedly practice it to the point where they have become accustomed to it.

Based on this, the meaning of the verse is as follows: 'Amongst the Bedouins who live in the deserts around Medina are hypocrites who persist in their hypocrisy, and there are hypocrites amongst the inhabitants of Medina who have become accustomed to it as well. You do not know who they are, O Muḥammad, but We know them well and We will punish them twofold before we consign them to a painful torment.'

Commentators have disagreed about the meaning of the phrase, *We will punish them twice*—what are these two occasions on which they will be punished? Some have said it means once in this world through being taken prisoner, killed, or the like, and once when they are punished in their graves. Others have suggested that it means they will be punished in this world through their payment of *zakāt* and in the next world through the punishment of the grave. Still others have argued that it means they will be punished by having the penalty for treason applied to them in this life and they will be punished in their graves in the next. Some have said it means they will be punished by being exposed and shamed in this world and once by being punished in their graves. Other opinions have been given but there is no evidence for any of them in the verse itself, and if we must choose one of them, then the first seems the most appropriate explanation.

وَآخَرُونَ اعْتَرَفُوا بِذُنُوبِهِمْ خَلَطُوا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَآخَرَ سَيِّئًا عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾

(9:102) ***And others who have confessed to their sins, having mixed up righteous conduct with other that was evil. Maybe God will accept their repentance. Indeed God is all-forgiving, all-merciful.***

In other words, amongst the Bedouins there are another group of people who are sinful but are not hypocrites like the others. On the contrary, they admit to their sins: They do some righteous deeds and some unrighteous ones and mix the two together. It is hoped that God will accept their repentance and forgive them, for He is all-forgiving and all-merciful.

Maybe God will accept their repentance: This statement gives hope to their hearts that they might be caught between this hope and the fear of punishment rather than despairing of salvation and giving up. The verse's coda, *Indeed God is all-forgiving, all-merciful*, emphasizes the side of hope.

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ
سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾

(9:103) ***Take charity from their possessions to cleanse them* (tuṭahhiruhum)** ***and purify them* (tuzakkīhim)** ***thereby, and bless them. Indeed your blessing is a comfort* (sakan)** ***to them, and God is all-hearing, all-knowing.***

The verb *tuṭahhir* ('cleanse') means to remove dirt and pollutants from something so that its being becomes clean and ready to grow, flourish, and display its blessings. The verb *tuzakkī* ('purify') means to cause something to grow and flourish by bringing out its goodness and blessings. For example, when a gardener prunes the excess branches from a tree, this aids its growth and increases the amount of fruit it produces. Therefore, the reader should pay attention to the subtle wording of the verse, which combines the two actions of cleansing and purifying.

The phrase, *Take charity from their possessions* (*amwāl*), is a command to the Prophet to take charity out of people's wealth. Note that the verse uses the plural *amwāl* ('possessions') rather than the singular *māl* ('property') to show that charity is taken on many different kinds of property and wealth: The two precious metals of gold and silver; the three species of cattle, namely camels, cows, and sheep; and the four varieties of crop, namely wheat, barley, dates, and grapes.

...to cleanse them and purify them thereby: This is also addressed to the Prophet and should not be read as an adverb of the word '*charity*' (*ṣadaqa*), because the adverb '*thereby*' refers back to charity. In other words, it means: 'O Muḥammad, take charity from all the kinds of wealth that they possess, so that you may cleanse them and purify them by taking this charity.'

...and bless them: To bless them means to supplicate for them. The context of the verse indicates that this supplication is for both their persons and their property to be blessed by God. Indeed, it was part of the Prophetic practice to invoke God to bless those who gave *zakāt* and to bless their wealth.

Indeed your blessing is a comfort to them: A *sakan* ('comfort') is

something in which one finds rest and security. In other words, your supplications on their behalf put their hearts at rest and they place their trust in them. This blessing is a form of expressing gratitude for their efforts for the sake of God. Equally, the verse's coda, *and God is all-hearing, all-knowing*, is also meant to provide comfort to those who pay *zakāt* and hear the verse being recited or recite it themselves.

Note that, based on its apparent meaning, this verse contains the ordinance of the *zakāt* tax on people's property, which is one of the pillars of Islam. This has been explained in numerous traditions that have come down from the Imams of the Prophet's Household and from others as well.

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾

(9:104) ***Do they not know that it is God who accepts the repentance of His servants and receives the charities, and that it is God who is the All-clement, the All-merciful?***

This is a rhetorical question, intended to motivate people to give the *zakāt* willingly and enthusiastically. It is as if to say they are really giving this charity to God, and the Messenger or the tax agent is merely the one who receives it on His behalf. Therefore, when one gives charity, it is as though they are giving it directly to Him. Conversely, the one who takes these payments is really God as well. We find similar ideas expressed in the verses: *Indeed those who swear allegiance to you, swear allegiance only to God: the hand of God is above their hands* (48:10); *...and you did not throw when you threw, rather it was God who threw* (8:17); *Whoever obeys the Messenger certainly obeys God* (4:80).

So, the way this verse has been phrased is intended to inspire people to deal directly with their Lord, as though when they deliver their charities their hands are touching His, even though He is utterly free from physicality and transcendent above time and space.

Note how the giving of charity is associated with repentance, as repentance is a form of purification and paying charity is also a form of purification. Therefore, when one pays charity, this is like an act of financial repentance and, by the same token, when one repents to God, this is an act of charity with one's deeds and movements. Hence, when God adds a second part to the question in this verse, *and that it is God who is the All-clement, the All-merciful?* He reminds His servants of His two divine names of the All-clement

and the All-merciful, under whose purview both charity and repentance fall.

From this, it is evident that giving charity and paying *zakāt* are forms of repentance.

وَقُلِ اعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۖ وَسَتُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ
عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

(9:105) ***And say, 'Go on working: God will see your conduct, and His Apostle and the faithful, and you will be returned to the Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, and He will inform you concerning what you used to do.'***

This verse appears to follow on from the preceding one but addresses the faithful directly, as though to motivate and inspire them to give charity.

It is important to note that the wording of the verse is general, and there is nothing to suggest that it is only addressed to those of the faithful who give charity, nor even to the totality of the faithful. In fact, the verse encompasses everyone who does any deed whatsoever, whether they are disbelievers, hypocrites, or believers. At the least, it includes both the hypocrites and the believers together.

However, we can see similarities between this verse and the earlier one in this chapter, *God and His Messenger will observe your conduct, then you will be returned to the Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, and He will inform you concerning what you used to do* (9:94), insomuch as both of them say that God and the Messenger will see the addressee's conduct. And, while the verse we are discussing does not explicitly mention the faithful, there are some indications that it is primarily addressed to them. After all, when we read these two verses together, they seem to say that while the true nature of the hypocrites' conduct—meaning the aims and goals that underlie them—were hidden from the majority of people, God knew them and, through His revelation, His Messenger knew them as well. On the other hand, according to the present verse, the true nature of the faithful's deeds—their goals, their effects, and the benefits that derive from them, such as the spread of Godwariness, the reformation of Islamic society, support for the poor and needy, and the purification and multiplication of wealth—was known to God and His Messenger, and the faithful could witness them amongst themselves.

On the other hand, we see that actions manifest their true nature, their effects, and the benefits and harms they cause in the environment in which

they are performed. The outward appearance and representation of these actions change from one time to another. These are not specific to the deeds of one people or another, rather the deeds of every nation and people will one day have their effects and everyone will eventually see those effects.

Therefore, when the verse says that the faithful will witness the conduct of those who do deeds, if this meant that they will witness the appearance of their effects and outcomes—or, to put it another way, they will see their true nature in the garb of the effects they produce—this kind of witnessing is not specific to one people rather than another, nor is it specific to the deeds of one people rather than the deeds of another. So, why is it that the faithful will see this but the hypocrites will not, even though they are both members of the same society? And why will the believers not see the conduct of the hypocrites, even while this is taking place in their community and amongst their own actions?

This, along with the context of the verse, leads me to believe that it should be understood in another way. God says, *and you will be returned to the Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, and He will inform you concerning what you used to do* (9:105).

This shows, first of all, that the phrase, *God will see your conduct*, relates to everything that takes place in this world before the Resurrection, as evinced by the phrase, *and you will be returned...*, as this is a reference to the Day of Resurrection. Everything before the Day of Resurrection is part of this world.

Second, it shows that they will only see the reality of their deeds on the Day of Resurrection. As for before this time, they will only see the outward appearance thereof. This is an idea we have repeatedly called attention to in our previous discussions. Therefore, their knowledge of the reality of their deeds is restricted to the Day of Judgement when God informs them of this. However, the verse says that God, His Messenger, and the faithful will see their conduct in this world before the Day of Resurrection. Furthermore, God is mentioned alongside His Messenger and, while He is the one who knows the realities of these deeds, He can reveal this to His Prophet. Therefore, when the verse speaks about the faithful, it is talking about those who witness the deeds of others, not the faithful in their entirety, as per the verse, *Thus We have made you a middle nation that you may be witnesses to the people, and that the Messenger may be a witness to you* (2:143), which we have already discussed in detail in the relevant chapter of this commentary.

Based on the above, the meaning of the verse is as follows: 'Say, O Muḥammad, do whatever deeds you please—good or bad—for God will surely

see the reality of your conduct, and His Messenger and the faithful—who are the witnesses to deeds—will see them too, then on the Day of Judgement you will be returned to God, who is the Knower of the sensible and the unseen, and He will show you the reality of your deeds.'

In other words: 'Whatever good or evil you do, its true nature is fully visible to God, who is the Knower of the sensible and the unseen, then to His Messenger and the faithful in this world, then to you yourselves, O doers of deeds, on the Day of Resurrection.'

Therefore, this aim of this verse is to tell people to be mindful of their own conduct. It does this by reminding them that their deeds—whether good or evil—have realities that are not hidden behind any veil, and that there are those who are observing them and witnessing these deeds and who will become aware of the true nature of them. These are the Messenger of God, and the faithful who are witnesses to the deeds of others. Beyond them is God, who encompasses all things in knowledge: He sees these deeds, and the witnesses also see them. Then, it is God who will draw back the veil from them on the Day of Judgement so that those who did the deeds can perceive them for what they really are, as per the verse: *You were certainly oblivious of this. We have removed your veil from you, and so your sight is acute today* (50:22). So there is a great difference between someone who does a deed in private where none can see him and between someone who does the same act publicly in full sight of onlookers and knowing that this is the case.

This, so far, has been about the present verse. Now, let us turn to the earlier verse: *They will offer you excuses when you return to them. Say, 'Do not make excuses; we will never believe you. God has informed us of your state of affairs. God and His Messenger will observe your conduct, then you will be returned to the Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, and He will inform you concerning what you used to do'* (9:94).

This verse appears to be directed towards specific individuals among the hypocrites. In it, God bids the Prophet to reject their excuses and tell them, first of all, that God has informed him and the faithful who were with him on the expedition to Tabūk of their activities through the revelation of these verses that relate information about them, and that He has made known their evil deeds.

Then, the verse tells the hypocrites that the reality of their deeds is not veiled or hidden from God, nor from His Messenger—although the verse does not mention anything about the faithful who are witnesses to deeds—and that God will reveal the reality of their own deeds to them on the Day

of Resurrection.

This is the key difference between the two verses, even though they appear to occur in the same context as one another. The present verse mentions God, His Messenger, and the faithful. By contrast, the previous verse only mentions God, His Messenger, and no one else. This is the conclusion we have drawn from reflecting on the meaning of these verses. Someone who is not convinced by this and instead wishes to read the verse in a more literal way might argue that God only mentions Himself and His Messenger when speaking to the hypocrites because they are plotting against God and His Messenger rather than the faithful. On the other hand, God mentions Himself, His Messenger, as well as the faithful when speaking to everyone in order to encourage people to do righteous deeds in the company of the righteous and not to concern themselves with the opinions of the disbelievers and hypocrites. The reader should ponder on this further.

وَآخَرُونَ مُرْجَوْنَ لِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِمَّا يُعَذِّبُهُمْ وَإِمَّا يَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾

(9:106) ***And others awaiting God's edict: either He shall punish them, or turn to them clemently, and God is all-knowing, all-wise.***

This verse follows on from the earlier verse, *And others who have confessed to their sins…* (9:102).

The meaning of *awaiting God's edict* is that they are neither closer to punishment or forgiveness. Therefore, their matter devolves to whatever God wills for them, and He can do as He wishes.

Looked at on its own, this verse seems to apply to those who are abased in the land (*mustaḍʿafīn*), who occupy a middle position between the virtuous and the wicked. Traditions concerning the occasion of this verse's revelation have come down saying that it was originally revealed about three men who stayed back from Tabūk but then repented, and God revealed to His Messenger that He had accepted their repentance. We shall discuss this below.

In any case, the verse does not state what will ultimately become of these persons, and even its coda seems ambiguous, as it invokes the names of God the All-knowing and All-wise. This shows that God will judge them according to His knowledge and His wisdom. Compare this to the coda of the previous verse, *And others who have confessed to their sins…* (9:102), where God says, *Maybe God will accept their repentance. Indeed God is all-forgiving,*

all-merciful.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, Dāwūd b. al-Ḥusayn narrates that he asked Imām al-Ṣādiq about the verse, *Yet among the Bedouins are those who believe in God and the Last Day, and regard what they spend as nearness to God*... (9:99): 'Will they be rewarded for this?' The Imām responded, 'Yes.'

In the same source, Abū ʿAmr al-Zubayrī narrates that Imām al-Ṣādiq told him: 'God races the believers against one another just as horses are raced against one another.'

He asked, 'Tell me about how God has bid the faithful to vie with one another for faith.'

He said, '*And hasten towards your Lord's forgiveness and a paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth* (3:133)';

'*And the Foremost Ones are the foremost ones: they are the ones brought near*' (56:10–11);

Then, he said, '*The early vanguard of the Emigrants and the Helpers and those who followed them in virtue—God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him* (9:100). See how He begins with the early Emigrants because of their priority, then He follows with the Helpers second, then He follows with the followers and bids them to be virtuous. So, He has placed each group according to their specific level and station in His eyes.'

(2) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is narrated from Mālik b. Anas from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Ibn ʿAbbās: '*The early vanguard* was revealed about the Commander of the Faithful, for he was the first person of all mankind to believe, and he prayed to both *qibla*s, and gave the two pledges at Badr and Ḥudaybiyya, and he made the emigrations, with Jaʿfar from Mecca to Ethiopia, and from Ethiopia to Medina.'

Author's comments: There are other narrations with the same meaning.

(3) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Mardawayh narrates via al-Awzāʿī, from Yaḥyā b. Kathīr, al-Qāsim, Makḥūl, ʿAbda b. Abī Labāba, and Ḥassān b. ʿAṭiya that they heard a group of the Prophet's Companions say: 'When the verse was revealed, *The early vanguard... and they are pleased with Him*, the Messenger of God said, "This is for all of my nation, and there is no wrath after God's pleasure."'

Author's comments: This means that those whom *God is pleased with*

them and they are pleased with Him are the ones included in this verse, not that God is pleased with the entirety of the Muslim community, as this is in explicit contradiction with the Qur'an itself. Equally, when the Prophet says, 'there is no wrath after God's pleasure', this does not mean that God could not be displeased with someone after the revelation of this verse. As we have already discussed, this does not refer to all cases where God is pleased with someone, because this is incongruous with other verses of the Qur'an.

(4) In the same source, it is narrated by Abū al-Shaykh and Ibn ʿAsākir from Abū Ṣakhr Ḥamīd b. Ziyād: 'I said to Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Qaraẓī, "Tell me about the Companions of the Messenger of God", and I was referring to the divisions that took place after the Prophet. He said, "God has forgiven all of the Companions of the Prophet and made paradise incumbent for them in His Book, regardless of whether they behaved virtuously or wickedly." I said, "Where has God guaranteed them paradise in His Book?" He said, "Do you not recite the verse, *The early vanguard...*? He has guaranteed paradise and His pleasure to all of the Companions of the Prophet, for He stipulated a condition for the followers that He did not stipulate for them."

'I said, "What condition did He stipulate for them?"

'He said, "He stipulated that they should follow them in virtue, meaning that they should imitate them in the performance of good deeds and not in anything else."'

'Abū Ṣakhr remarked, 'By God, I felt as though I had not properly read this verse nor grasped its explanation before Muḥammad b. Kaʿb had recited it to me.'

Author's comments: As you can see, this tradition accepts that the Companions' deeds were both good and evil, obedient and sinful, but says that God was still pleased with them nevertheless and forgave them for all of their misdeeds. However, as we have already explained above, the logical conclusion of such a reading is to deny the many verses of the Qur'an that make clear that God is never pleased with a people who transgress or do wrong and that He neither loves them nor guides them. In fact, this tradition would restrict even more of the Qur'an's verses than this, including those that indicate that all people will be rewarded for their good and evil deeds accordingly, upon which the validity of all of the commands and prohibitions of the Qur'an and other legal verses ultimately rest.

If the verse did, in fact, mean what this tradition claims it means, then the

Companions, who were native Arabic speakers who lived at the time of the Prophet and heard the revelation as it was revealed, would have understood these verses in this manner. And had the Companions indeed understood the verses in this manner, they would not have treated one another in the way that history has recorded.

How could all of the Companions be included within the Qur'anic verse, *God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him*, and understand the verse in this manner, only for them not to be pleased with one another while knowing that God was pleased with them all. After all, the one who is pleased with God is pleased with everything that pleases God. This problem is not resolved by the claim that the Companions differed in their interpretations (*ijtihād*), for even if that were the case, that is only an excuse in practical affairs. It does not resolve the contradiction between being pleased with God while not being pleased with all that God is pleased with. However, this is a lengthy discussion and one that is beyond the scope of the present work.

(5) In the same source, it is narrated by Abū ʿUbayd, Sunayd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Ibn Mardawayh from Ḥabīb al-Shahīd, from ʿAmr b. ʿĀmir al-Anṣārī that ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb recited the verse, *The early vanguard of the Emigrants and the Helpers and those who followed them in virtue*, but without the '*and those*' after Helpers, so that it read 'The early vanguard of the Emigrants and the Helpers who followed them in virtue.' Zayd b. Thābit corrected him, 'it is *and those who...*', but ʿUmar insisted 'it is "who..."', to which Zayd responded, 'The Commander of the Faithful knows better.' ʿUmar said, 'Bring me Ubayy b. Kaʿb!' So Ubayy came and ʿUmar asked him about this. Ubayy said, 'It is, *and those who...*' ʿUmar said, 'Yes, then we shall follow Ubayy.'

Author's comments: The effect of ʿUmar's reading was to restrict the virtues of '*the vanguard*' to the Emigrants and add to that the merit of being followed by the Helpers, as the tradition below illustrates.

(6) In the same source, Ibn Jarīr and Abū al-Shaykh narrate from Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Qarazī: "Umar passed by a man reciting the verse, *The early vanguard of the Emigrants and the Helpers...*', so ʿUmar grabbed his arm and said, "Who taught you to recite it this way?" The man replied, "Ubayy b. Kaʿb." ʿUmar said, "I will not let you go until I take you to him." So when they came to him, ʿUmar said, "Did you teach this man to recite the verse in this way?" Ubayy replied, "Yes." ʿUmar asked, "Did you hear this from the Messenger

of God?" Ubayy said, "Yes." He said, "Until now, I thought that the Emigrants were the group with the highest merit and that no one after us shared that."

'Ubayy said, "The confirmation of my reading can be found at the beginning of Sūrah al-Jumu'a: *And to others from among them who have not yet joined them* (62:3); in Sūrah al-Ḥashr: *Our Lord, forgive us and our brethren who were our forerunners in the faith* (59:10); and in Sūrah al-Anfāl: *And those who believed afterwards and migrated, and strived beside you, they belong to you...* (8:75)."'

(7) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via Mūsā b. Bakr, from a man, from Imām al-Bāqir: 'Those who have *mixed up righteous conduct with other that was evil* (9:102) are a group of believers who pollute their faith with sins—which the truly faithful consider shameful and detestable—so perhaps God will accept their repentance.'

Author's comments: Al-'Ayyāshī narrates the same tradition in his *Tafsīr* from Zurāra, from Imām al-Bāqir, except that he describes them as 'a group of sinners' rather than 'a group of believers.'

(8) In *Majma' al-Bayān*, concerning the verse, *and others who have confessed to their sins* (9:102), it is narrated from Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī: 'It has reached us that these were three members of the Helpers: Abū Kināna b. 'Abd al-Mundhir, Tha'laba b. Wadī'a, and Aws b. Hidhām, who stayed back when the Messenger of God set forth for Tabūk. However, when they heard what God had sent down about those who did not accompany His Prophet, they were sure they were ruined, so they tied themselves to the pillars of the mosque and remained there until the Messenger of God returned and asked about them. He was told that they had sworn to remain like this until the Messenger of God untied them, to which the Messenger of God replied, "I swear that I will not be the one to untie them unless I am given some commandment concerning them."

'So, when the verse came down, *maybe God will accept their repentance*, the Messenger of God went and untied them. They went away and returned with their property to the Messenger of God, saying, "These are our properties that we withheld from you, so take them and give them as charity." The Prophet replied, "I have not been given any instructions regarding this." Then the verse came down, *Take charity from their possessions* (9:103).'

Author's comments: There are other traditions with the same meaning

found in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, although the names of the men mentioned differ in them. One problem with these traditions is that it makes out that the verse of charity was revealed specifically concerning their wealth, and this runs contrary to a multitude of narrations that state that this verse was revealed about the obligatory charity of *zakāt*.

(9) In the same source, it is narrated from Imām al-Bāqir: 'This verse was revealed about Abū Lubāba and no one else. The occasion of its revelation was with regard to the Banū Qurayẓa tribe, namely his decision to execute them.'

(10) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via a chain of narrators from 'Abd Allāh b. Sinān, from Imām al-Ṣādiq: 'When the verse was revealed, *Take charity from their possessions to cleanse them and purify them thereby*—which was sent down in the month of Ramaḍān—the Messenger of God appointed a caller to announce to the people that God had imposed *zakāt* upon them as He had imposed prayer previously, and that God had stipulated that they pay a share of their gold and silver, and give over a share of their camels, cows, and sheep, and from their crops of wheat, barley, dates, and raisins. This was announced to them in the month of Ramaḍān and they were forgiven for anything before that time... then they were not required to pay anything else from their wealth until a full year had passed and they had fasted to the end of the month and celebrated 'Īd al-Fiṭr. Whereupon a caller announced, "O Muslims! Cleanse your wealth through charity so that your prayers might be accepted!" Then there came the collectors of charity and land tax.'

(11) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is narrated from Ibn Abī Shayba, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā'ī, Ibn Māja, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Ibn Mardawayh, from 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Awfā: 'When the Messenger of God was brought some charity, he would say, "O God, bless the family of so-and-so." When So Ubayy brought him some charity, he said, "O Allāh, bless the family of Abū Awfā."'

(12) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is narrated from al-Ṣadūq, via a chain of narrators from Sulaymān b. Mihrān, from Imām al-Ṣādiq, about the verse, *Do they not know that it is God who accepts the repentance of His servants and receives the charities...* (9:104): 'He accepts them from those who deliver them and rewards them for them.'

(13) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, it is narrated from Mālik b. 'Aṭiyya, from Imām al-Ṣādiq that 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn said: 'I have a guarantee from my

Lord that charity does not reach the hand of the servant before it has reached the hand of the Lord. This is the verse, *it is God who accepts the repentance of His servants and receives the charities*.'

Author's comments: There are numerous other traditions with the same meaning narrated from the Prophet, ʿAlī, Imām al-Bāqir, and Imām al-Ṣādiq.

(14) In *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt*, it is narrated via a chain of narrators from Muḥammad b. Muslim, from Imām al-Bāqir: 'I asked about whether our deeds are displayed to the Messenger of God. He said, "Is there any doubt? Have you seen the words of God, *Go on working: God will see your conduct, and His Apostle and the faithful*? God has witnesses amongst His creatures."'

Author's comments: There is a veritable multitude of traditions with the same meaning narrated in Shīʿī collections from the Imams of the Prophet's Household. Most of them assert that '*the faithful*' in this verse is a reference to the Imams. How this correlates with the explanation we have already given for the verse is clear.

(15) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via a chain of narrators from Zurāra, from Imām al-Bāqir, concerning the verse, *And others awaiting God's edict* (9:106): 'This concerns people who were idolaters and killed the likes of Ḥamza, Jaʿfar, and other Muslims, only later to convert to Islam, affirm the oneness of God, and forsake idolatry. However, they did not fully embrace faith with their hearts, such that they would be believers and therefore guaranteed paradise, but nor did they persist in pre-Islamic ignorance, in which case they would have been consigned to Hellfire. Therefore, in this state, they are awaiting God's edict, whether He will punish them or turn to them clemently.'

Author's comments: Al-ʿAyyāshī narrates this in his commentary from Zurāra, from the Imām, and there are other narrations with the same meaning.

(16) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Ḥumrān: 'I asked Imām al-Ṣādiq about those who are abased in the land (*mustaḍʿafīn*). He said, "They are neither true believers or disbelievers, so they are *awaiting God's edict*."'

(17) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn a-Mundhir narrates from 'Ikrima, concerning the verse, *And others awaiting God's edict*: 'They are the three who stayed behind [on the Prophet's mission to Tabūk].'

Author's comments: Similar interpretations have been reported from Mujāhid and Qatāda, and the names of the three men who stayed behind are Hilāl b. Umayya, Marāra b. al-Rabīʿ, and Kaʿb b. Mālik, from the Aws and the

Khazraj tribes. However, as we will discuss later, their story does not match the contents of the verse.

A Discourse on *Zakāt* and Other Charities

Contemporary discussions about society and economics and other topics related to them believe each society, in as much as it is a society, to need wealth that can be spent in order to meet its citizens' needs. This is considered an indisputable and self-evident fact, which no one could possibly doubt. However, many of the issues dealt with in these discussions about society and economics—including this issue in particular—were something that the general public did not think about in earlier times, nor did they pay attention to it except in a general or instinctive way. By contrast, such issues are today discussed by both the masses and the elite.

Nevertheless, insofar as Islam has addressed the character and nature of society, promulgated rules regarding wealth and property therein, and created a system of laws to regulate its various components, it has the upper hand in this field.

The Qur'an teaches that society is formed from a collection of individuals while being more than merely the sum of its parts. When people form a society, they create a new entity with its own life and identity. A society lives, ages, and dies; feels and decides: grows weaker and stronger; has its own duties; and is capable of both virtue and wickedness, and of attaining both happiness and misery, just like any individual human being. All of this has been explained by a multitude of verses in the Qur'an, and it is something we have repeatedly pointed to through the course of our previous discussions.

The Islamic legal code sets aside a portion of wealth and profit for the benefit of society in the form of obligatory charities, such as *zakāt*, *khums*, and the like thereof. This, of course, is nothing new, as compulsory taxation was part of earlier faiths and legal codes, such as that of Hammurabi or the laws of ancient Rome. In fact, virtually all peoples and communities throughout history have had some concept of wealth that is to be used for public benefit. Therefore, no matter what form a society took, it always had financial needs that had to be met in order for it to survive and grow.

However, there are important features of the Islamic legal code that sets it apart from all other traditions and legal codes and which are essential for it to attain its ultimate goals. Therefore, in order to properly understand Islam's teachings in this regard, we must consider the following:

First: Taxation in Islam is limited to wealth creation and does not go

beyond this. In other words, when someone creates wealth in some way—for example, by harvesting crops that they have grown, from profit made through trade, or some other means—a share of this wealth is considered to be the property of the community, while the remainder is the rightful property of the one who created it from his capital or his effort, and his only obligation is to deliver the share that belongs to the community.

However, consider the following verses: *It is He who created for you all that is in the earth* (2:29); *Do not give the feeble-minded your property which God has assigned you to manage* (4:5).

These might be taken to indicate that when wealth is created, it belongs in totality to the community, and then a share of it is assigned to the individual who we call its "owner" or "creator." The remaining share of it, which is that of *zakāt* or *khums*, is still considered the property of the community. Therefore, individual ownership is secondary to collective ownership. We have already discussed this to some extent in our commentary on the above verses.

In short, the taxes imposed by the Islamic legal code, such as *zakāt* and *khums*, are only imposed on generated wealth at the time it is produced. Hence, the society shares ownership of the sum of this wealth with the individual, but the individual is free to dispose of his share of the wealth as he pleases on legitimate pursuits and no one has any right to prevent him from doing so. The only exception to this principle would be if the society was facing an existential threat—such as an attack by an enemy that intended to completely annihilate its population—in which case he would be expected to spend his wealth in order to protect the life of the society of which he was a member.

As for taxes levied on persons, expenses, real estate, and commerce under certain conditions or in special circumstances, such as fees taken for passage across the border and the like, Islam does not recognise these as valid forms of taxation. On the contrary, from the viewpoint of Islam, such taxes are forms of usurpation and oppression by the state, which circumscribe the freedom of an individual in managing his own wealth. Therefore, society should only take a share of a person's wealth when it is first created, whether by the seizure of spoils or creation of profit. It is only at this point that the society has a claim over the individual's wealth in the manner expounded by Islamic jurisprudence. However, once this wealth has become the property of the individual, then no one can interfere with the owner's right to dispose of it as he pleases under any conditions or circumstances, as this would circumscribe his freedom and deprive him of his liberty.

Second: As we have already highlighted, Islam attaches more importance

to the rights of individuals in matters of private property than it does to the community. This does not mean that it does not consider the community's needs, only that it gives priority to its individual members. For example, we see that God has ordained that *zakāt* is to be shared between eight categories, of which only one is 'in the way of God' (*fī sabīl Allāh*), while the remainder is for the poor, the needy, those who collect the *zakāt*, those whose hearts are to be reconciled and others; equally, the *khums* is to be distributed between six categories, of which only one is assigned to God, while the remainder are assigned to the Messenger, the near relatives, the orphans, the poor, and the wayfarer.

The reason for this is that the individual is the basic unit from which society is formed, and it is through the individual that Islam can enact some of its basic social programmes, such as the eradication of class differences, the creation of justice and equality between the different elements of society, and the maintenance of balance and moderation in society and its various constituent parts. None of this can be accomplished without improving the condition of individuals in society and bringing their lives closer together.

If the situation of people in the community is not improved and their lives are not brought closer together, and if class differences are allowed to fester and worsen, then none of these problems will be solved. No matter how much money is spent on public corporations, urban renewal, or erecting grand palaces, so long as the conditions of the strong and the weak and the rich and the poor are not addressed, these differences will only worsen. This is confirmed by the experience of human history.

Third: The individual Muslim has the right to pay what he owes in obligatory taxes such as *zakāt* directly to those who are entitled to receive these, such as the poor or needy, without needing to first pay these to the ruler or their representative. He can deliver this directly to those who are entitled to receive it.

This is an example of the respect that Islam has for the autonomy of individual members of the community. For example, each and every Muslim has the right to grant asylum to any disbeliever—even one who is at war with the Muslims—and no other Muslim, not even the Muslim ruler, has the right to violate that guarantee of protection. However, the ruler of the Muslims does have the right to forbid the granting of protection to such persons if they deem that to be in the best interests of Islam and the Muslims, in which case individual Muslims must not give such guarantees.

Verses 107–110

These verses discuss yet another group of hypocrites who built a mosque in order to cause harm (known as Masjid al-Ḍirār or the Mosque of Sabotage) and compares their state to that of a group of believers who built a mosque out of reverence for God.

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَارًا وَكُفْرًا وَتَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَإِرْصَادًا
لِمَنْ حَارَبَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَلَيَحْلِفُنَّ إِنْ أَرَدْنَا إِلَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ ۖ وَاللَّهُ
يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

(9:107) ***As for those*** **(wa alladhīna)** ***who took to a mosque for sabotage*** **(ḍirār)** ***and for defiance, and to cause division among the faithful, and for the purpose of ambush*** **(irṣād)** ***by those who have fought God and His Messenger before—they will surely swear: 'We desired nothing but good,' and God bears witness that they are indeed liars.***

The term *ḍirār* ('sabotage') means 'to cause harm (*ḍarar*).'

Irṣād ('ambush') means to take a spot from which one can lie in wait and observe.

As for those who took to a mosque for sabotage: What is the function of the conjunction *wa* (lit. 'and', here translated as 'as for') at the beginning of the verse? If these verses were revealed about the hypocrites at the same time as the verses above, then each tranche of verses is enumerating a different group of them. It is as if to say: 'One group is such-and-such... and another group is such-and-such... and yet another group is such-and-such....'

On the other hand, if this set of verses was revealed separately, then the *wa* represents the beginning of a new sentence, of which the phrase, '*those who took to a mosque for sabotage*' is the subject and '*Do not stand in it ever!*' (9:108) is the predicate. However, even if the verses were revealed separately, they could be understood in the same manner as mentioned above. Commentators on the Qur'an have mentioned a number of different grammatical analyses of the verse. However, we have omitted further discussion of these because of their tortuousness.

God has explained the aims that lay behind this group of hypocrites taking this mosque as causing harm to others, dividing the faithful, and providing a place of ambush to those who were making war on God and His Messenger. These aims are connected to a specific historical account which corresponds closely in its details to the contents of the verse: Scholars of narrations are in agreement that a band of the Banū ʿAmr b. ʿAwf tribe built a mosque in the village of Qubā and asked the Prophet to pray in it, which he did. However, a group of the Banū Ghanim b. ʿAwf tribe who were hypocrites became envious of them and so built a mosque right beside the Qubā mosque in order to sabotage the efforts of their neighbors and cause divisions among the faithful. They were awaiting the arrival of the Christian monk Abū ʿĀmir, who had promised to bring an army from the Romans to expel the Prophet from Medina and had bid them to prepare to fight alongside them.

Once they had built the second mosque, the Prophet came—and he was making preparations to march to Tabūk—and they asked him to come to the mosque, pray in it, and invoke God's blessings upon them therein. So, he promised that once he had finished with the matter of Tabūk and returned to Medina, he would do so. It was then that the verse was revealed.

Therefore, they built their mosque in order to sabotage the Qubā mosque, defy God and His Messenger, divide the believers who were gathered in Qubā, and to provide a place of ambush for the Christian monk Abū ʿĀmir, who was a long-standing enemy of God and His Messenger. In this verse, God foretells that the hypocrites will swear that they only had good intentions behind building the mosque—that they only wished to do good and provide another place of worship for the faithful to pray to God therein—but God bears witness to their deceit, saying: *they will surely swear: 'We desired nothing but good,' and God bears witness that they are indeed liars*.

لَا تَقُمْ فِيهِ أَبَدًا ۚ لَمَسْجِدٌ أُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهِ ۚ فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَتَطَهَّرُوا ۚ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَّهِّرِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

(9:108) ***Do not stand in it ever! A mosque founded on Godwariness from the first day is worthier that you stand in it for prayer. Therein are men who love to keep pure, and God loves those who keep pure.***

God opens this verse by forbidding the Prophet from ever standing in the hypocrites' mosque in prayer. He then mentions the mosque of Qubā,

gives preference to standing in that for prayer, and praises it with the words, *A mosque founded on Godwariness from the first day is worthier that you stand in it for prayer*. God praises the mosque for the pure intentions of those who built it from the outset, and He gives this as the reason why it is preferable to stand in prayer in this mosque than in the mosque of the hypocrites.

In short, while the word '*worthier*' does not in of itself indicate that the Prophet is obliged to offer prayers in the mosque of Qubā, the fact that the opening of the verse forbade the Prophet from ever praying in the mosque of the hypocrites conveys this meaning. Equally, when God explains the fact that such a mosque is '*worthier*' by saying *therein are men who love to keep pure* and follows this with the phrase *God loves those who keep pure*, this shows that He is speaking about the mosque of Qubā and not the Prophet's Mosque or any other.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: 'Never offer any prayers in the mosque of the hypocrites, for I swear that the mosque of Qubā is a mosque founded on Godwariness from the first day and, as such, it is worthier and better for you to offer prayers in it. After all, it contains men who love to keep themselves pure from sins or cleansed of impurities, and God loves those who keep themselves pure. Therefore, you should stand in prayer amongst them.'

Based on this, it is evident that the statement, *A mosque founded on Godwariness...*, is offered as an explanation for why one mosque is better than the other. Equally, the statement, *Therein are men who love to keep pure*, explains why the people of one mosque are better than the people of another. Finally, the opening of the next verse, *Is he who founds his building on Godwariness* (9:109), is a further explanation of the second, namely why the people of the mosque of Qubā are superior to the hypocrites who built the Mosque of Sabotage.

أَفَمَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَىٰ تَقْوَىٰ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ خَيْرٌ أَمْ مَنْ أَسَّسَ
بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَىٰ شَفَا جُرُفٍ هَارٍ فَانْهَارَ بِهِ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي
الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ لَا يَزَالُ بُنْيَانُهُمُ الَّذِي بَنَوْا رِيبَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَّا أَنْ
تَقَطَّعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١١٠﴾

(9:109-110) ***Is he who founds his building on Godwariness and pleasure better-off or he who founds his building on the brink*** **(shafā)** ***of a collapsing bank*** **(juruf hārin)** ***which collapses with***

him into the fire of hell? And God does not guide the wrongdoing lot. The building they have built will never cease to be disquiet in their hearts lest their hearts are cut into pieces, and God is all-knowing, all-wise.

The word *shafā* ('brink') means the edge of a well, while *juruf* ('bank') signifies the bank of a valley that has been carved by a stream, while *hār* ('collapsing') is actually derived from *hā'ir*, which means for something to fall down because of its own softness. Therefore, when God says, ...*on the brink of a collapsing bank which collapses with him into the fire of hell*... He produces a metaphor in which He compares the state of the hypocrites in question with a person who builds a structure whose foundations rest on the edge of the water and, as such, are completely unreliable in their stability or strength. Then, the building sinks into the valley and takes him with it. This valley, of course, symbolizes hell. Therefore, both he and his building will topple into the depths of hell. This is in contrast to someone who lays the foundation of his building on Godwariness and seeking God's pleasure; in other words, to someone who bases his life on protecting Himself from God's punishment and earning His satisfaction instead.

From the context of the verse, it appears that both *Is he who founds his building on Godwariness* and *he who founds his building on the brink of a collapsing bank* are two metaphors for the lives of the faithful and the hypocrites, namely their respective religions and ways of living their lives. So the religion of the believer is being wary of God and seeking His pleasure based on his certainty about Him, while the religion of the hypocrite is based on doubt and hesitation.

It is for this reason that God follows this with the beginning of the next verse, *The building they have built*—that is, the hypocrites—*will never cease to be a disquiet*—a source of doubt—*in their hearts*—which will never attain certainty—*lest their hearts are cut into pieces*—whereat these doubts will be shredded with their hearts—*and God is all-knowing, all-wise* (9:110)—which is why He lowers one group and raises up another.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Majmaʿal-bayān*, commentators on the Qur'an are quoted as saying that the Banū ʿAmr b. ʿAwf tribe had made a mosque in the village of Qubā and sent word to the Messenger of God asking him to visit them, so he visited them and offered prayers in the mosque. A group

of hypocrites from the Banū Ghanim b. ʿAwf grew envious of them because of this and said, 'We will build a mosque of our own to pray in and we will not attend the congregation of Muḥammad!' They were twelve men in total—some sources say fifteen—and included Thaʿlaba b. Ḥāṭib, Muʿattib b. Qushayr, and Nabtal b. al-Ḥārith. They built their mosque beside the mosque of Qubā.

When they had built it, the Messenger of God visited them while he was making preparations for the campaign to Tabūk. They said, 'O Messenger of God! Surely we have built a mosque for the sick and the needy, for rainy nights and winter nights, and we would like you to visit us, pray in it for us, and ask God to bless us!' He answered, 'I am about to travel, but when we return, we will come to you, God willing, and offer prayers therein for you.' But when the Messenger of God departed from Tabūk, the verse was revealed concerning the mosque...

So, upon his return to Medina from Tabūk, the Messenger of God sent ʿĀṣim b. ʿAwf al-ʿAjlānī and Mālik b. al-Dukhshum—and Mālik was from the Banū ʿAmr b. ʿAwf tribe—with the instructions: 'Go to this mosque whose people are wrongdoers and pull it down and set it alight.' And it is narrated that he sent ʿAmmār b. Yāsir and Waḥshī to raze it to the ground, and he ordered that its site should be turned into a refuse dump.

Author's comments: According to al-Qummī's narration, the Messenger of God sent Mālik b. Dukhshum al-Khuzāʿī and ʿĀmir b. ʿAdī, the brother of the ʿAmr b. ʿAwf tribe. Mālik came to ʿĀmir and said, 'Wait while I bring a fire from inside my house, so he went into his home and brought a fire on a palm branch, which he used to set the roof of the mosque alight. The people of the mosque scattered and Zayd b. Ḥāritha until the entire building had burnt down, then he ordered that the walls be torn down.

The story is narrated by numerous chains of transmission by Sunnī authorities, and all of the accounts resemble one another closely in their details, except for the names of the men that the Prophet sent to undertake this task, in which they differ.

(2) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrate from Ibn Isḥāq that those who built the Mosque of Sabtoage were twelve men, Khidhām b. Khālid b. ʿUbayd b. Zayd, Thaʿlaba b. Ḥāṭib, Hilāl b. Umayya, Muʿattib b. Qushayr, Abū Ḥabīb b. al-Azʿar, ʿIbād b. Ḥanīf, Jāriya b. ʿĀmir, and his two sons Majmaʿ and Zayd,

along with Nabta l b. al-Ḥārith, and Bikhdaj (Bijād) b. ʿUthmān, and Wadīʿa b. Thābit.

(3) In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, about the verse, *and for the purpose of ambush by those who have fought God and His Messenger before* (9:107), we read: 'This refers to Abū ʿĀmir the Christian monk. His story is that he lived as a hermit before Islam and wore rough clothes. When the Prophet came to Medina, he envied his status, and began to whip up opposition to him amongst the Arabs. After the conquest of Mecca, he fled to Ṭā'if, and when the people of Ṭā'if submitted, he sought refuge with the Romans in Syria and converted to Christianity. He was the father of Ḥanẓala—whose corpse was famously washed by the angels when he became a martyr—who was slain fighting beside the Prophet at the Battle of Uḥud.

The Messenger of God called Abū ʿĀmir 'the Sinner' (*al-Fāsiq*). He had sent words to the hypocrites to build a mosque and prepare for war, claiming that he was going to seek help from the Roman Emperor and bring an army with him to expel Muḥammad from Medina. These hypocrites believed that Abū ʿĀmir would indeed come to them with an army, but he died before reaching the emperor.

Author's comments: There are several narrations with this meaning.

(4) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates from al-Ḥalabī, from Abū ʿAbdallāh: 'I asked him about the mosque which was founded on Godwariness.' He said: 'The mosque of Qubā.'

Author's comments: al-ʿAyyāshī narrates this in his *Tafsīr*, and a tradition with the same meaning is narrated in al-Kāfī with a chain of narrators from Muʿāwiya b. ʿAmmār, from him.

(5) And it is narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr* by more than one chain of transmission from the Prophet, that he said, 'It is my mosque.' However, this contradicts the apparent meaning of the verse, especially the phrase, '*Therein are men who...*', for the context of this verse is a comparison between two mosques: The mosque of Qubā and the Mosque of Sabotage, and a comparison between their two congregations. There is no sense in this relating to the mosque of the Prophet in Medina.

(6) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from al-Ḥalabī, from al-Ṣādiq: 'I asked him about the verse, *therein are men who love to keep pure*. He said, "The ones who love to keep pure are clean in their ablutions, they cleanse themselves after urinating using water." He added: "This

was revealed about the people of Qubā.'"

(7) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, about the same verse, we read: 'They love to purify themselves with water after urinating or defecating. This is narrated from the masters al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq, and it is narrated from the Prophet that he asked the people of Qubā, "What do you do when purifying yourselves that led God to praise you in this beautiful way?" They said: "We wash away the impurity of defecation." He said, "God has revealed about you, *and God loves those who keep pure*."'

(8) In the same source, we read, concerning the mode of recitation of the verse, *lest their hearts are cut into pieces* (9:110), that Yaʿqūb and Sahl recited it as 'until such time as...' (*ilā an*), and this is the recitation of al-Ḥasan, Qatāda, al-Jahdarī and a group. This recitation is also narrated by al-Barqī from Imām al-Ṣādiq.

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Verses 111–123

These verses deal with a variety of concerns that all fall under a common theme that is linked to the concerns of the earlier verses. They speak about fighting, some of them praising the faithful and promising them a beautiful reward in return for striving in the way of God, while there are others that forbid them from showing friendship to the idolaters or seeking forgiveness for them. Others still indicate that God forgave the three men who stayed behind instead of going with the Prophet to Tabūk, while yet others impose upon the inhabitants of Medina and the Bedouins in the city's vicinity the duty to go forth when the Prophet should he set out to fight and not to hang back. Then there are verses that indicate that some people should remain behind to deepen their understanding of the religion (*al-tafaqquh fī al-dīn*) in order to convey its teachings to their people when they return to them, and others that ordain that the faithful should fight the disbelievers who live on the borders of the lands of Islam.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ ۚ يُقَاتِلُونَ
فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ ۖ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَاةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ
وَالْقُرْآنِ ۚ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۚ فَاسْتَبْشِرُوا بِبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ
بِهِ ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١١١﴾

(9:111) ***Indeed God has bought*** **(ishtarā)** ***from the faithful their souls and their possessions for paradise to be theirs: they fight in the way of God, kill, and are killed. A promise binding upon Him in the Torah and the Evangel and the Qur'an. And who is truer to his promise than God? So rejoice in the bargain you have made with Him, and that is the great success.***

The word *ishtarā* means to purchase a commodity and take possession of it by paying its price to its seller. In these verses, God mentions His promise to grant paradise to those who strive in His way using their persons and their possessions, adding that He mentioned this previously in the Torah and Evangel just as He now mentions it in the Qur'an. God has formulated this promise

in the style of a contract of sale, with Himself as the buyer and the faithful as the sellers, their persons and possessions as the commodities He is purchasing, paradise as the price He is paying for these, and the Torah, Evangel, and the Qur'an as receipts of purchase. This is an exceedingly subtle metaphor. He then congratulates the faithful for their purchase and commends them on their great success.

التَّائِبُونَ الْعَابِدُونَ الْحَامِدُونَ السَّائِحُونَ الرَّاكِعُونَ السَّاجِدُونَ الْآمِرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَالْحَافِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾

(9:112) ***The penitent, devout, celebrators of God's praise, wayfarers, who bow and prostrate, bid what is right and forbid what is wrong, and preserve God's bounds—and give good news to the faithful.***

God describes the faithful using their most beautiful qualities, assigning them attributes that are undoubtedly lofty and praiseworthy. Therefore, the verse means that 'The faithful are the penitent, devout…'—they are penitent (*tā'ibūn*, lit. 'returners') because they turn away from other than God and towards God, they are devout in their worship to Him; they worship Him with their tongues by praising and magnifying Him; they worship Him with their feet by travelling to places in which He is remembered, from one mosque to another, and from one religious site to another; and they worship Him with their bodies by bowing and prostrating to Him in prayer.

This is only looking at them as individuals. In terms of their communal existence, the faithful are the ones who enjoin others to good in the religious tradition and forbid them from evil. They are the ones who preserve the bounds (*ḥudūd*) of God and do not transgress them on an individual or communal level, and whether they are in public or in private. Then, God tells the Prophet to give them good tidings, and God has already given them good tidings in the previous verses. This represents, then, the utmost level of emphasis.

From what we have said, the following becomes clear:

First, regarding the order in which the qualities of the faithful are arranged: God begins by listing their qualities as individuals, namely penitence, devotion, travelling, bowing, and prostrating. Then, He mentions those qualities of theirs that are specific to their collective faithfulness, namely that they

enjoin the good and forbid the evil. Finally, He praises them for the quality that combines both their individual and communal existences, namely that they preserve God's bounds. The use of the word 'preserve' (*ḥifẓ*) shows that not only do they not transgress them, but are actively mindful of them and guard them.

Second, that, based on the context of the verse, the meaning of 'travelling' (*siyāḥa*)—which literally means to move through the land—is travelling to the places in which God is remembered and worshipped, such as mosques. As for the interpretation that says this refers to fasting, or to travelling through the land in order to draw lessons from the wonders of God's creation and the fates of earlier peoples from the ruins of their abodes, or travelling in the land in order to gain knowledge, or travelling in order to collect Prophetic sayings particularly—all of these are without basis.

As for the first—that it refers to fasting—there is no evidence for this from the text whatsoever. As for the other interpretations of 'travelling', these might find support from the following verses: *Have they not travelled over the land so that they may observe how was the fate of those who were before them? They were more numerous than them and were in power and with respect to the effects in the land. But what they used to earn did not avail them* (40:82). *Yet it is not for the faithful to go forth en masse. But why should not there go forth a group from each of their sections to become learned in religion...* (9:122).

However, if either of these meanings—travelling through the land to learn from the fates of earlier peoples or to gain knowledge—is what was intended by the word '*wayfarers*' (*sā'iḥūn*), this would undermine the eloquent arrangement of the attributes in the verse.

Third, it is through these noble attributes that a believer's faith (*īmān*) becomes complete, which entitles them to the divine guarantee of paradise. This is illustrated by the fact that both God and His Messenger give them glad tidings of this in these verses, which stems from the fact that they respected rights of God, which in turn means that God will deliver what He has imposed on Himself to give to them.

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا أُولِي قُرْبَىٰ
مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَهَا إِيَّاهُ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ
تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ ۚ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾

(9:113-114) ***The Prophet and the faithful may not plead for the forgiveness of the polytheists, even if they should be relatives, after it has become clear to them that they will be the inmates of hell. Abraham's pleading forgiveness for his father was only to fulfil a promise he had made him. So when it became manifest to him that he was an enemy of God, he repudiated him. Indeed Abraham was most plaintive and forbearing.***

The meaning of the first verse is clear. However, it is worth paying attention to the explanation that God gives in the second verse about the reason Abraham pleaded to God for his father's forgiveness, even though his father was a disbeliever. Here, God says that Abraham disassociated from him after it became clear that he was an enemy of God. This shows that when it becomes clear that the idolaters are inmates of hellfire, the logical conclusion to be drawn from this is that one should not plead to God for their forgiveness, because if they are being consigned to hell, this can only mean that they are enemies of God. Therefore, when it is clear to the Prophet and the faithful that the idolaters are enemies of God, this means that they are not allowed to plead to God for their forgiveness, because it is pointless to do so and will have no effect, and the humility of a servant's faith should prevent them from invoking God for pointless things.

This is because there are only two possibilities: First, that God is an enemy of His servant and detests him because of some shortcoming on his part or some misdeed he committed, in which case it is permitted to appeal to God's mercy, and plead for Him to forgive the servant and show him mercy, so long as the servant is humble and not recalcitrant. However, the second possibility is that the servant is an enemy of God, who makes war on Him, who is wilfully and defiantly opposed to Him, such as the most implacable opponents of Islam amongst the idolaters. In this case, common sense dictates that no intercession or prayers for forgiveness will be of any use to such a person unless he repents, returns to God, and forsakes the path of arrogance and obstinacy by putting on the garb of humility and lowliness. After all, it is meaningless to speak of God's forgiveness and mercy to someone too arrogant to accept either of these, nor of God's generosity in the case of someone who will not submit themselves to receive God's gifts without mocking the station of His lordship or making light of it—and this is something self-evidently forbidden by basic human nature.

The verse conveys the impermissibility of seeking forgiveness for the

idolaters by denying the Prophet and the faithful the right to do so with the following phrase, *The Prophet and the faithful may not plead for the forgiveness of the polytheists*. In other words, they do not have the right to pray for their forgiveness *after it has become clear to them that they will be the inmates of hell*. We have already discussed in our commentary on the earlier verse from this chapter, *It is not for the polytheists to maintain God's mosques* (9:17) that in order for something to be permissible for someone to do, the divine law must have already established the right for them to do it.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is that the Prophet and the faithful do not have the right to invoke God to ask Him to forgive the idolaters once it has become clear to them that they are the enemies of God who are destined to abide forever in Hell, even if they are close relatives. As for Abraham's prayers for His idolatrous father's forgiveness, this is because he did not think that his own father was an obstinate enemy of God, even if he was an idolater. Therefore, he fulfilled his promise to him to ask God to forgive him, but once it became clear that his father was an enemy of God who would never give up his idolatry and erroneous ways, he disassociated from him.

Indeed Abraham was most plaintive and forbearing: This shows that Abraham tolerated his father's harshness and promised to pray for his forgiveness because he was a patient person and then prayed for his forgiveness because he was saddened by his father's idolatry. Someone who is plaintive (*awwāh*) is deeply grieved by his fear of his Lord and his longing for Him.

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّ قَوْمًا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَاهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ مَا يَتَّقُونَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ۚ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١١٦﴾

(9:115-116) ***God does not lead any people astray after He has guided them until He has made clear to them what they should beware of. Indeed God has knowledge of all things. Indeed to God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and brings death. And besides God you do not have any guardian or helper.***

These two verses continue on from the above two and offer a rationale for the prohibition on seeking forgiveness for idolaters.

As for the first verse—*God does not lead any people astray*—this warns the faithful that they are at risk of being led astray after being guided if they are

not wary of that which God has bid them to be wary of and to avoid. In the present context, this refers to the fact that the idolaters are enemies of God and it is not permissible to seek forgiveness for them or to show affection to them. Therefore, the faithful should be wary of that and avoid it, or else they will go astray after having been guided. Readers should refer to our explanation of the verse from Sūrah al-Mā'ida, *Today the faithless have despaired of your religion. So do not fear them, but fear Me* (5:3), as well as our commentary on the verse from Sūrah al-Anfāl about taking the idolaters and People of the Book as allies (*awliyā'*).

From one angle, this verse is in the same vein as God's saying, *That is because God never changes a blessing that He has bestowed on a people unless they change what is in their own souls* (8:53) and other verses with similar meanings. All of these verses indicate that God's modus operandi is to continue to bestow blessings and guidance upon His servants until they change what is with themselves through their own ingratitude or transgressions, whereat God deprives them of these blessings and guidance.

As for the second verse, namely, *Indeed to God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and brings death. And besides God you do not have any guardian or helper*, its coda provides the rationale for the principle encapsulated in the preceding verse. In short, it forbids the faithful from taking God's enemies as allies or guardians and bids them to disassociate from them, for there is no real guardian or helper besides God Himself. He explains this to the faithful and, therefore, by virtue of their faith, they are obliged to take no other guardian other than Him or those who He has permitted them to take as guardians from among His chosen friends. They should not go beyond the bounds by taking His enemies as guardians, no matter who they might be.

The opening of the verse provides the rationale behind this rationale, namely that God is the true master of all things, who controls life and death and governs all things. Therefore, he is the true guardian, besides whom there is no guardian.

From the generality of the wording of these four verses and of the rationales they offer, it is evident that the principle they expound is also general in scope, namely the duty to disassociate from the enemies of God and the prohibition on taking them as allies or guardians. This is true whether this takes the form of seeking forgiveness for them from God or any other act, and whether they are idolaters, disbelievers, hypocrites, innovators, or anyone who otherwise denies God's signs or who persists in commissioning major sins, such as the usurer or the one who makes war on God and His Messenger.

لَقَدْ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ فِي سَاعَةِ
الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبُ فَرِيقٍ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ بِهِمْ
رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خُلِّفُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ
الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَنْ لَا مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللَّهِ
إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١١٨﴾

(9:117-118) ***Certainly God turned clemently to the Prophet and the Emigrants and the Helpers, who followed him in the hour of difficulty*** **(sāʿat al-ʿusra),** ***after the hearts of a part of them were about to swerve*** **(yazīgh).** ***Then He turned clemently to them—indeed He is most kind and merciful to them—and to the three who were left behind*** **(khullifū).** ***When the earth became narrow for them with its expanse*** **(bi mā raḥubat),** ***and their own souls weighed heavily on them, and they knew that there was no refuge from God except in Him, then He turned clemently toward them so that they might be penitent. Indeed God is the All-clement, the All-merciful.***

The term *sāʿat* ('hour') refers to a quantity of time. Therefore, '*the hour of difficulty*' (*sāʿat al-ʿusra*) denotes a time in which one's life becomes difficult because one has been afflicted by hardships and tribulations, such as thirst, hunger, extreme heat, or the like thereof.

Yazīgh ('swerve') means to depart from the path or incline away from the truth. Describing hearts as '*about to swerve*', in conjunction with '*the hour of difficulty*', and in addition to the overall tone and context of the verse, indicates that the meaning of '*swerve*' here is to refuse to follow the instructions of the Prophet and to disobey him by being sluggish in answering his call to arms or in returning to one's homeland by taking a route that is fraught with difficulties and hardships.

According to *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, *khullifū* ('left behind') means for something to fall behind someone who has gone ahead; it does not mean that you have left something behind in a specific place. The verb *kullifū*, whose infinitive is *takhlīf*, is derived from the root *khalf*, which means 'back' as opposed to 'face' (*wajh*). The verb *khallafa-hu* means to turn your back on something, which means it is 'left behind' (*mukhallaf*).

Raḥubat ('expanse') means to be wide and open, as opposed to narrow

(*ḍayyiq*).

Therefore, each of these verses considers a different situation. The first says that God turned clemently to the Emigrants and the Helpers, while the second says that He forgave the three who were left behind. In both cases, the term *tawba* is used, but in each one it means something different. In the case of the first verse, God turns clemently to the people (or at least some of them) mentioned in it even while they have not committed any sins, while in the second verse, God turns clemently to people who have acted sinfully.

Therefore, each of the two verses has its own locus of concern and meaning. However, they are clearly intended to be read together, in a single context, with a single aim in mind. After all, both of these are explaining God's clemency towards the Prophet, the Emigrants, the Helpers, and the three who were left behind, as is evident from the way the two verses are constructed: *Certainly God turned clemently to the Prophet and the Emigrants and the Helpers... and to the three who were left behind*. Therefore, the second verse is not independent of the first one in terms of its wording, even if it is distinct in its meaning. This means that the two verses must have been revealed at the same time and their connection to one another points to them having been revealed with a specific purpose in mind.

Perhaps the primary concern of the two verses is to express God's clemency towards the three who were left behind, to which God has added His clemency towards the Emigrants, the Helpers, and even the Prophet himself. This is in order to offer the three who were left behind comfort and to reassure them that they are once again a part of the community of the faithful, that they are no longer separate from them, and that the effects of their sin have been effaced fully. Therefore, they are now all part of the same category, namely those to whom God has turned clemently with His mercy, hence they are now once again equals, without any of them being higher or lower than any other.

This illustrates why the term *tawba* is repeated twice in each of the two verses. God begins by saying that He turned clemently to the Prophet, the Emigrants, and the Helpers, then adds that *then He turned clemently to them*, before mentioning the three who were left behind and adding, *then He turned clemently toward them*. In this case, what this shows is that God is alternating between general and specific points. He begins by mentioning how He turned clemently to all of them in general, before referring to each of the two groups specifically and saying that He turned clemently to each of them in particular.

Now, if each of the two verses was completely distinct from the other and there was no common thread to connect them, this repetition of *tawba*

in each of the verses would have been meaningless.

The first verse clearly indicates that the Prophet was neither sinful, nor swerved, nor was about to swerve, as it praises the Emigrants and Helpers for following the Prophet. Therefore, his heart cannot have swerved nor been about to swerve, or else it would not have made sense to praise them for following his example. Equally, if it was not the case that the two verses were connected to one another, it would not have made sense to include the Prophet amongst those mentioned in the verses.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is as follows: God swears that He turned clemently with His mercy towards the Prophet, the Emigrants, the Helpers, and the three who were left behind. As for His turning clemently towards the Emigrants and Helpers with His mercy, this is because they followed the Prophet at a time of great hardship, which was during his campaign to Tabūk. They followed him even after some of their hearts were about to swerve from the path of truth and righteousness and turn back from the journey they were undertaking, but once they resolved to follow him, God turned clemently to them and forgave them, for He is most kind and most merciful.

As for His turning clemently towards the three who were left behind, this is after their affair became difficult and the earth grew narrow for them in spite of its vastness. This is because people would not interact with them or speak to them, not even their own families, so they could find no friends to keep them company. Then their own souls weighed on them because of the grief they felt and they became certain that there was no refuge from God except through turning to Him penitently that He might forgive them. And He accepted their repentance because He is the All-clement (*al-tawwāb*)—meaning He often returns to His servants through granting them guidance and the success of repenting to Him, then He accepts this repentance from them—and He is ever merciful to the faithful.

From the above, the following becomes clear: First, the meaning of God turning clemently (*tawba*) to the Prophet means only that He turned towards Him mercifully. And part of God turning mercifully towards the Prophet is that He turned mercifully towards the Prophet's community. Therefore, God turning clemently to the faithful is the same as Him turning clemently to the Prophet, meaning that the Prophet is the intermediary for whose sake all goodness and blessings come down to his community.

In addition to this, part of God's grace to His Prophet is that whenever He mentions the Prophet's community or those who are with him in a good manner, He singles out the Prophet for mention and mentions him first in

order to ennoble him. For example, see the verses: *The Messenger has faith in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and all the faithful* (2:285); *Then God sent down His composure upon His Messenger and upon the faithful* (9:26); *But the Messenger and the faithful who are with him strive with their possessions and persons* (9:88).

Second, when God says for a second and third time in each of the two verses that *He turned clemently to them*, this is providing more detail for what He said at their beginning, *Certainly God turned clemently*.

Third, that the meaning of *tawba* in the phrase, *then He turned clemently to them* (thumma tāba ʿalayhim), in both verses is that He returned to them by guiding them towards goodness and success. As we have mentioned on numerous occasions previously, the *tawba* (repentance) of a servant to God is actually encompassed by two acts of *tawba* (turning clemently) by God to them. The first of these is that God turns towards them by granting them success and extending to them the mercy of guidance. Through this act of *tawba*, the servant is guided to seek forgiveness for his sins from God. The second act of *tawba* by God towards His servant is that He turns towards him by accepting his repentance and forgiving him for his sins.

The evidence that this is what is meant in these two instances is as follows: In the first verse, the people mentioned by God include are not sinful. Therefore, the act of *tawba* performed by God here cannot be the acceptance of their repentance or the forgiveness of their sins. Instead, God mentions the hearts of some of them almost swerving from the path of righteousness. With this in mind, *tawba* in the sense of extending guidance and granting success to them would appear to be the most appropriate meaning. At the same time, in the second verse, God says that He turned clemently toward them *so that they might be penitent* (li-yatūbū), meaning so that they seek forgiveness for their sins. In other words, inspiring their repentance was the purpose of His *tawba*, and He cannot have forgiven their sins before they had repented for them. Therefore, this must also refer to the first kind of *tawba* by God, namely granting them success and extending guidance to them.

This reading is perhaps supported by the rationale God gives for His act of *tawba*, namely that *He is most kind and merciful to them*, as these divine names (the Most Kind or *al-raʾūf*, and the Most Merciful, *al-raḥīm*) do not signify His acceptance of any repentance, nor does the verse indicate that they had repented or sought forgiveness for their sins yet.

Fourth, the pronoun '*they*' in the phrase, *so that they might be penitent* (li-yatūbū), refers to the three who had been left behind, and their repentance

was the result of God turning to them clemently in the first instance. Therefore, the meaning of this phrase is as follows: 'Then God turned clemently toward them so that the three who were left behind might repent and He might accept their repentance and forgive them for their sins. Surely He is the All-clement, the All-merciful.'

Now, one might argue that such a reading would mean that the verse does not indicate that God accepted their repentance, which runs contrary to the mass of traditions that state that this verse was revealed about their repentance and subsequent forgiveness.

I would respond to this by saying that while the account referenced is well-established in the traditional literature, the verse itself does not contain any explicit indication of this. However, the context and tone of the verse strongly suggest that they were forgiven. For example, God says in general terms: *Certainly God turned clemently...* and because of the generality of this phrase, its meaning can accommodate both *tawba* in the sense of God granting them success and the sense of God accepting their repentance. The same is true of the end of the second verse, *Indeed God is the All-clement, the All-merciful*, especially when this is read in light of the earlier statement in the same verse, *and they knew that there was no refuge from God except in Him*. After all, when they repent in order to seek refuge in which to feel safe from God's wrath, and God has shown them the way to it through repentance, and then they repent in accordance with His guidance, it is unthinkable that God would turn them away from His door when He is the All-clement and the All-merciful. And it is the same God who said, *acceptance of repentance by God is only for those who commit evil out of ignorance, then repent promptly. It is such whose repentance God will accept, and God is all-knowing, all-wise* (4:17).

Now, one might argue that the meaning of the statement, *then He turned clemently toward them so that they might be penitent*, is that God made repentance easy for that in order that they might repent. However, this is a nonsensical reading. More nonsensical still is the claim that the term *tawba* in the phrase *so that they might be penitent* (li-yatūbū) is to be understood literally, namely so that they could 'return' to their state of being before sinning. Even more nonsensical is the claim made by others that the pronoun '*they*' in *so that they might be penitent* actually refers to the faithful, and that the full meaning of the passage is: 'They God forgave the three who stayed behind and revealed this to His Prophet so that the faithful might be encouraged to repent for their sins with the knowledge that God is the one who accepts repentance.

Fifth, that the verb *ẓann* in the phrase *and they knew* (*ẓannū*) *that there*

was no refuge from God except in Him is to be understood as 'they knew' rather than 'they thought', not because of any textual evidence for this meaning, but because of the context in which it occurs.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾

(9:119) ***O you who have faith! Be wary of God, and be with the Truthful.***

Truthfulness (*ṣidq*), at its most basic level, means that a statement corresponds to external reality, and a person is described as 'truthful' (*ṣādiq*) when their words match external reality. Then, in as much as all beliefs and decisions can be conceptualized as statements, the meaning of truthfulness expands to consider a person truthful not only if their words match external reality, but if their deeds match their beliefs, or if they accomplish what they resolve to do.

Now, insofar as the verse commands the faithful to be wary of God generally, and mentions the truthful generally, and commands the faithful to be with the truthful generally—meaning to be 'with' them in their deeds by following their example, this shows that truthful is being used in its most expansive sense and not referring to any specific group of people.

Therefore, the verse commands the faithful to be Godwary and to follow the truthful in their words and deeds. However, this is not the same as telling them to be truthful, as then God would have said, 'and be <u>of</u> the truthful' instead, as should be clear.

مَا كَانَ لِأَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ أَنْ يَتَخَلَّفُوا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَرْغَبُوا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ لَا يُصِيبُهُمْ ظَمَأٌ وَلَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا مَخْمَصَةٌ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَطَئُونَ مَوْطِئًا يَغِيظُ الْكُفَّارَ وَلَا يَنَالُونَ مِنْ عَدُوٍّ نَيْلًا إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ بِهِ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

(9:120) ***It is not fitting for the people of Madinah and the Bedouins around them to hang back behind the Messenger of God and prefer*** **(yarghabū)** ***their own lives to his life. That is because they neither experience any thirst, nor fatigue, nor hunger, in the way of God, nor do they tread any ground enraging the faithless, nor do they gain any ground against an enemy but a righteous deed***

is written for them on its account. Indeed God does not waste the reward of the virtuous.

The verb '*yarghabū*' is derived from *raghba*. When *raghba* is accompanied by the preposition *fī*, it is translated as 'to desire', as it denotes a selfish inclination towards something that is driven by a desire to obtain benefit from it. On the other hand, when it takes the preposition *'an*, it is translated as 'to be averse to' or 'to neglect', and it means that someone wants to avoid something. In the phrase, "and prefer their own lives to his life" (*wa lā yarghabū bi-anfusihim 'an nafsihi*), we see that the preposition *bi* is used to indicate the cause of their aversion. Therefore, the meaning of this part of the verse is as follows: 'Nor should their concern for their own lives cause them to care nothing for his, such that they forsake him in times of danger, such as warfare, or hardship, such as on journeys, in order to sit back and enjoy the pleasures of life.

This verse says that the people of Medina and the surrounding Bedouin tribes have no right to abandon the Prophet. He follows on from this by saying that He will count every hardship they endure striving in His way, whether hunger, thirst, or tiredness, and for every step they advance by which they enrage the faithless or make gains against them as a righteous act that is worthy of divine reward. This is because these acts render them virtuous and God does not squander the reward of the virtuous. This is the meaning of the passage that begins, *that is because they neither experience any thirst...*

وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَ نَفَقَةً صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً وَلَا يَقْطَعُونَ وَادِيًا إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾

(9:121) ***And neither do they incur any expense, big or small, nor do they cross any valley, but it is written to their account, so that God may reward them by the best of what they used to do.***

The verse says that whatever expenses they incur, whether these are small and trivial or great and consequential, and whatever valley they cross, all of this is written for them as a reward so that they will be granted the best recompense in the Hereafter.

...so that God may reward them by the best of what they used to do: This explains why *a righteous deed is written for them* on account of what they endured. In other words, the reason these righteous deeds are written for them is so that they can be rewarded for the best of their deeds. God singles out the best of their deeds for mention either because this gives them the greatest

level of motivation to act, or because the fact they are being rewarded for the best of them means that they will be rewarded for all their other good deeds as well, or because the meaning of '*the best of what they used to do*' is striving in the way of God, as it is the most difficult undertaking and the foundation upon which the call of Islam rests.

There is another meaning to consider here as well, namely that the recompense for a deed is, in reality, nothing other than the deed itself in the form that it returned to God. Therefore, the best recompense is, quite literally, the best deeds. In other words, to be rewarded '*by the best of what they used to do*' is to be given the very best of rewards. Yet another meaning to reflect on is that God will forgive them for their misdeeds that pollute and contaminate their good ones, while also concealing their defects. Therefore, all that is left are their best deeds as everything else has been effaced. Therefore there is nothing to reward them for other than '*the best of what they used to do*.' And perhaps both of the meanings we have highlighted here are, at root, one and the same.

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَافَّةً ۚ فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ
لِيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنْذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

(9:122) ***Yet it is not for the faithful to go forth en masse. But why should not there go forth a group from each of their sections to become learned in religion, and to warn their people when they return to them, so that they may beware?***

The context of the verse shows that the meaning of '*to go forth en masse*' means 'to go forth to fight in God's way all at once,' while the pronoun '*their*' in '*their sections*' refers to the faithful who should not go forth en masse. The context also indicates that '*go forth*' here means 'to go forth to the Prophet to become learned in religion.'

This verse forbids the faithful in all of the regions other than Medina to go forth to fight in the way of God altogether. Instead, it encourages them to send a delegation of their people to the Prophet to become learned in religion, while others go out to fight.

Based on this reading, it makes the most sense that the pronoun '*they*' in '*when they return to them*' refers to the group that went to become learned in religion. Then, the pronoun '*them*' in the same phrase refers to '*their people*.' In which case, the meaning is: 'When those who became learned in the religion return to their people.' However, it is also possible to reverse these pronouns,

which would render the meaning: 'When their people return from fighting in the way of God to this group that have become learned in religion and returned to their homeland.'

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is that it is not permitted for the believers in various lands to go forth to fight in the way of God all at once. Instead, a group from every section of the faithful should go to the Prophet in order to receive instruction in the teachings of the faith, that they may act upon it themselves and warn their people by disseminating these teachings to them and making them aware of the deleterious effects of contravening the precepts of the religion so that they might be Godwary and pious.

Based on this, it is clear that the phrase "become learned in religion" (*yatafaqqahū fī al-dīn*) encompasses learning all of the roots and branches of the faith and not only its practical laws, which is what religious people today commonly understand from the word *fiqh*. The evidence for this is the use of the phrase, *to warn their people*, as they can only accomplish this if they have learned about all aspects of the faith.

Second, that the duty of going forth to fight in the way of God is lifted from students of religious knowledge, as indicated by the wording of the verse.

Third, that all of the other readings that have been applied to this verse by commentators do not fit with its overall context. For example, some of them say that *to go forth en masse* means to go forth to the Prophet en masse to study the religion. Others have said that *why should not there go forth a group* means a group should go forth to fight in the way of God and the meaning of *to become learned in religion* refers to those who remained behind, and that they will warn those who went forth to fight when they return to them. These readings and others like them are all at odds with the context of the verse, and there is little value in devoting more space to them here.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُمْ مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ وَلْيَجِدُوا فِيكُمْ غِلْظَةً ۚ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

(9:123) ***O you who have faith! Fight the faithless who are in your vicinity, and let them find severity in you, and know that God is with the Godwary.***

This is a general ordinance to fight in the way of God, which is intended to expand the borders of Islam until they encompass the whole world, as if each group of the faithful fight the faithless who are in their vicinity, this will

inevitably lead to the expansion of Islam and the establishment of its rule over the entire world and all of its inhabitants.

Let them find severity in you means let them find steadfastness for the sake of God. It does not mean coarseness, viciousness, evil manners, or hardness of heart, as these are traits utterly condemned by the moral and ethical teachings of Islam itself. Moreover, all of the verses dealing with fighting in the way of God prohibit all forms of transgression and viciousness, as we have already discussed in our commentary on Sūrah al-Baqarah.

And know that God is with the Godwary—this is a promise of support from God that is conditional upon the recipient's Godwariness (*taqwā*). This means that they should always be vigilant of themselves and mindful of the station of their Lord in relation to them, namely that He is with them and that they have the advantage so long as they are devoted to Him.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Mardawayh narrate from Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh that the following verse was revealed to the Messenger of God while he was in the mosque: *Indeed God has bought from the faithful their souls* (9:111), whereat all of the people in the mosque proclaimed, 'God is greater!' Then, a man from the Helpers who had thrown both sides of his robe over his shoulders came near and asked, 'O Messenger of God, is this a verse revealed?' He said, 'Yes.' Then, the man from the Helpers said, 'A profitable sale, and we shall never ask God to return His purchase to us!'

(2) In *al-Kāfī*, it is narrated from Samāʿa, from Imām al-Ṣādiq: "Abbād al-Baṣrī met ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn on the road to Mecca and told him, "O ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, you have given up fighting in the way of God and its difficulties and come instead to perform the hajj with its easiness! Surely, God has said: *Indeed God has bought...*!" To this, ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn replied, "When we find the people described in these verses, then yes, fighting in the way of God alongside them is better than hajj!"'

Author's comments: This is a reference to the second verse, *the penitent, devout, celebrators of God's praise...* (9:112).

(3) It is narrated from the Prophet: 'The wayfaring of my community is in the mosques.'[1]

1 No source for this narration is mentioned in the text. However, it can be found

Author's comments: It is narrated by Abū Hurayra from the Prophet that 'the wayfarers are those who fast.' Abū Umāma narrates from him: 'the wayfaring of my community is to fight in the way of God.' And we have discussed this already.

(4) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*—concerning the verse, *The Prophet and the faithful may not plead for the forgiveness of the polytheists* (9:113)—Ibn Abī Shayba, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Nasā'ī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in his *Dalā'il* all narrate from Sa'īd b. al-Musayyib from his father: 'When Abū Ṭālib was on his deathbed, the Prophet came to him, and Abū Jahl and 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Umayya were both there with him. The Prophet said, "O uncle! Say that there is no god but God and I will use this to intervene on your behalf with God." At this, Abū Jahl and 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Umayya said, "O Abū Ṭālib! Will you turn away from the religion of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib?"

'The Prophet continued to encourage him to testify to God's oneness, while Abū Jahl and 'Abd Allāh repeated their statement in response. Finally, Abū Ṭālib said, "I follow the religion of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib." And he refused to say that there was no god but God.

'So the Prophet said, "I will surely plead to God for your forgiveness if He allows me to do so." Then the verse was revealed, *The Prophet and the faithful may not plead for the forgiveness of the polytheists*. God sent this down concerning Abū Ṭālib, so the Messenger of God recited the verse, *You cannot guide whomever you wish, but God guides whomever He wishes, and He knows best those who are guided* (28:56).'

Author's comments: There are other narrations in the same vein found in Sunnī sources. Some of them state that when the Muslims saw the Prophet asking for God to forgive his uncle even though he was an idolater, they began to ask God to forgive their idolatrous forefathers as well, whereat this verse was revealed. However, the traditions narrated from the Imams of the Prophet's Household are unequivocal in stating that Abū Ṭālib was a Muslim but that he kept his faith hidden in order to protect the Prophet. Reliable accounts of his poems also indicate that he believed in monotheism and in the prophethood of his nephew, and we have already discussed a selection of these previously.

(5) In *al-Kāfī*, it is narrated via Zurāra from Abū Ja'far that the word

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in *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 8, p. 113. (Trans.)

'*plaintive*' in the verse, *Indeed Abraham was most plaintive and forbearing* (9:114), means that he supplicated to God frequently.

(6) In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, about the verse, *God does not lead any people astray...* (9:115), it is related from al-Ḥasan that a group of Muslims died as believers in Islam but before any religious obligations or duties had been revealed. The Muslims said, 'O Messenger of God, our Muslim brothers died before any obligations had been imposed on them, what is their position?' Then the verse was revealed, *God does not lead any people astray*.

(7) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Mardawayh relates from Ibn ʿAbbās about the same verse: 'This was revealed when they took a payment of ransom from the idolaters for the release of captives at the Battle of Badr. He said, "You should not have taken it before you were given permission, but God will not punish a people for a sin they commit *until He has made clear to them what they should beware of*"—meaning unless He has prohibited it already.'

Author's comments: The apparent meaning of these two narrations suggests that they are an application of the principle of the verse to a specific situation rather than genuine occasions of revelation for it. Furthermore, the verse in question is clearly connected to the two immediately before it and revealed in the same context as them, as we have already explained.

(8) In *al-Kāfī*, it is narrated from Ḥamza b. Muḥammad al-Ṭayyār from Imām al-Ṣādiq about the verse, *God does not lead any people astray after He has guided them until He has made clear to them what they should beware of*, 'Until He has made them aware of what pleases and angers Him.'

Author's comments: This is also narrated from ʿAbd al-Aʿlā from the Imām, and al-Barqī also narrates it in his *Maḥāsin*.

(9) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, concerning the verse, *Certainly God turned clemently to the Prophet and the Emigrants and the Helpers, who followed him in the hour of difficulty*, it is reported from Imām al-Ṣādiq: 'This verse was revealed about Abū Dharr, Abū Khaythama, and ʿUmayr b. Wahb, who did not immediately go forth with the Messenger of God but caught up with him thereafter.'

Author's comments: This is taken from a lengthy tradition that al-Qummī includes in his *Tafsīr* on the verse, *Had they desired to go forth, they would have surely made some preparations for it* (9:46). In *Majmaʿ al-bayān* there is a recitation of the verse recorded that reads: 'Had they desired to go

forth with the Prophet' narrated from Imām al-Ṣādiq and Imām al-Riḍā.

(10) In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, concerning the verse, *and to the three who were left behind* (9:118), we read: "Alī b. al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Bāqir, Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq and Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī recited this as: "who disobeyed" (*khālafū* instead of *khullifū*)."

(11) In the same source, concerning the verse, *Certainly God turned clemently to the Prophet and the Emigrants and the Helpers* (9:117), we read: 'This was revealed concerning the campaign to Tabūk and the hardships the Muslims faced therein. These were so severe that a group of them made up their minds to turn back, but then God showed His grace to them. Al-Ḥasan says, "There were ten Muslims who left with a camel that they shared between themselves, so that each of them would ride on its back for an hour and then get down and allow someone else to sit upon it. Their provisions consisted of barley flour with bran, worm-eaten dates, and rancid oil. When one of them was pressed by hunger, he would put a date in his mouth and chew on it to obtain its taste, then he would take it out and give it to his compatriot who would suck some of the moisture out of it, and they would pass it around until nothing remained of that date except its seed.'

(12) In the same source, concerning the verse, *and to the three who were left behind*, we read: 'This was revealed concerning the matter of Kaʿb b. Mālik, Marāra b. al-Rabīʿ, and Hilāl b. Umayya. They had hung back from the Messenger of God and not gone forth with him, not because of hypocrisy but because of procrastination. Then they regretted their actions and when the Prophet came to Medina they went to him and offered apologies, but the Prophet would not speak to them, and word had already reached the Muslims that no one should speak to them. Everyone shunned them—even children. Their womenfolk came to the Messenger of God and said to him, "O Messenger of God, should we leave them?" He said, "No, but do not be intimate with them either." As a result, the atmosphere of the city became claustrophobic for them, so they went out to the mountainsides. Their family would bring them supplies but would not talk to them. They said to one another, "People have shunned us. No one will speak to us. Should we not shun one another also?" So they dispersed and did not associate with one another any longer.

They remained in this state for fifty days, pleading with God and repenting to Him, then God accepted their repentance and send down this verse about them.'

Author's comments: We have already addressed this story through a lengthy tradition taken from *Tafsīr al-Qummī* concerning verse 9:46, and this story has been narrated in numerous sources.

(13) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is related from Ibn Shahrāshūb from the *Tafsīr* of Abū Yūsuf b. Yaʿqūb b. Sufiyān: ʿMālik b. Anas related to us from Nāfiʿ from Ibn ʿUmar: "*O you who have faith! Be wary of God...* (9:119), in this verse God commands the Companions to fear God." Then he said: "...*and be with the Truthful*, meaning be with Muḥammad and the People of His Household."'

Author's comments: There are numerous traditions from the Imams of the Prophet's Household with the same meaning. For example, in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Ibn Mardawayh narrates from Ibn ʿAbbās and from Ibn ʿAsākir from Imām al-Bāqir, about the verse: *and be with the Truthful*: 'Be with ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.'

(14) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via Yaʿqūb b. Shuʿayb that he asked Imām al-Ṣādiq, 'If the Imām dies, what should people do?' He responded, 'What became of God's commandment, *But why should not there go forth a group from each of their sections to become learned in religion, and to warn their people when they return to them, so that they may beware* (9:122)? They are excused from fighting in the way of God so long as they are seeking knowledge from the Imām, and those who are awaiting the return of the first group are also excused until their companions return.'

Author's comments: There are numerous narrations related with the same meaning from the Imams, and this shows that the meaning of '*become learned in religion*' in this verse is broader than merely learning religious law, which is how the term *fiqh* is understood nowadays.

And know that there are other claims regarding the occasions of revelation for some of the aforementioned verses, but we have omitted these because of their evident weakness and lack of support from within the text.

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Verses 124–129

These verses draw the chapter to a close. They mention the reaction of both the believers and the hypocrites when they witness the revelation of the Qur'an's chapters and highlight yet another trait of hypocrisy by which the hypocrite can be distinguished from the believer, namely that when the Qur'an is revealed, the hypocrites ask one another, 'Which of you did this increase in faith?' And when they look to one another and ask, 'Is anybody observing you?'

These verses also contain a description of the Prophet that will endear him to the hearts of the faithful and bid him to place his trust in God (*tawakkul*).

وَإِذَا مَا أُنْزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَقُولُ أَيُّكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هَٰذِهِ إِيمَانًا ۚ فَأَمَّا
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَزَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ
مَرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا إِلَىٰ رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

(9:124-125) ***Whenever a chapter is sent down, there are some of them who say, 'Which of you did it increase in faith?' As for those who have faith, it increases them in faith, and they rejoice. But as for those in whose heart is a sickness, it only adds defilement to their defilement, and they die while they are faithless.***

The way the question is posed—similar to the later question, 'Is anybody observing you?'—shows that the one asking it is concealing something in his heart, as the very nature of the question suggests that his heart is unmoved by the Qur'anic revelation and he wants to make sure that he is not alone in this regard. Therefore, he asks around for someone whose heart has been affected by the Qur'anic revelation. It is as if he believes that the Prophet is claiming that the Qur'an can put right any heart, whether it is ready to be reformed or not, but that he is not convinced by that because, whenever a new chapter of the Qur'an is revealed, he finds in his heart no fear of God, nor inclination or affection for the truth. On the contrary, he finds only doubt and misgivings. This leads him to ask everyone else who was present when the verse was revealed whether the revelation had any effect on them—in the hope that they will answer in the negative—so that he can feel justified in his own doubt and

persist in his hypocrisy.

In short, this question reveals the existence of hypocrisy in his heart.

Now, God has drawn a distinction between different kinds of heart, differentiating between the hearts of the faithful and those in whose hearts is a sickness. He says, *As for those who have faith, it increases them in faith, and they rejoice*—these are the ones whose hearts are free from hypocrisy and clear of any sickness. They already have certainty about their religion, because the Qur'an says that the chapter being revealed *increases them in faith*, for as the light of its divine guidance shines upon the ground of their heart, this intensifies the light of their own faith. Now, this is an increase not only in the quantity of their heart's faith but in its quality, as the receipt of a new revelation means that their hearts now encompass new Qur'anic teachings and divine realities. As these spread throughout the heart, they strengthen the light of faith therein and thereby increase their faith relative to what it was before. Therefore, it is also an increase in the quantity of their faith. The relationship between the increase in their faith to the revelation of a new chapter of the Qur'an is similar to the sort of cause-and-effect relationship we observe in the outside world. In any case, the revelation of a new chapter of the Qur'an increases the faith of the believers, expanding their hearts, and causing their faces to beam with joy: *and they rejoice*.

But as for those in whose heart is a sickness—those who harbour doubts and hypocrisy—*it only adds defilement to their defilement*—it only leads them to be further astray than they already were. God has referred to going astray (*ḍalāl*) as 'defilement' (*rijs*) elsewhere, in the verse: *and whomever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast narrow and straitened as if he were climbing to a height. Thus does God lay defilement on those who do not have faith* (6:125). The contrast between *those who have faith* and *those in whose heart is a sickness* in the present verse also shows that the latter group do not have genuine faith in their hearts, only doubt and obstinate denial. In any case, this is disbelief, which is why God says, *and they die while they are faithless.*

This verse shows that a chapter of the Qur'an has some effect on the hearts of those who hear it. If their hearts are healthy, then it increases them in faith and joy, but if they are diseased, then it increases them in defilement and error. This is akin to what God says in the verse, *We send down in the Qur'an that which is a cure and mercy for the faithful; and it increases the wrongdoers only in loss* (17:82).

أَوَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّهُمْ يُفْتَنُونَ فِي كُلِّ عَامٍ مَرَّةً أَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ لَا يَتُوبُونَ وَلَا هُمْ

يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿١٢٦﴾

(9:126) ***Do they not see that they are tried once or twice every year? Yet they neither repent, nor do they take admonition.***

This verse begins with a rhetorical question, which carries the force of an affirmation. In other words: 'Why do they not think and draw a lesson from the fact that they are tried and tested at least once or twice a year, yet they continue to disobey God and therefore continue to be put to tribulation by Him; they do not repent or take admonition. If they thought about it, they would realise that what their situation demanded of them and they would see clearly that continuing on their current course would only lead to them sinking further into defilement before suffering permanent ruin and everlasting loss.'

وَإِذَا مَا أُنْزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ نَظَرَ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ هَلْ يَرَاكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ ثُمَّ انْصَرَفُوا ۚ صَرَفَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

(9:127) ***And whenever a chapter is sent down, they look at one another: 'Is anybody observing you?'*** **(hal yarākum min aḥad)** ***Then they slip away. God has turned aside their hearts, for they are a people who do not understand.***

This is another trait of the hypocrites: Whenever a chapter of the Qur'an is sent down in their presence, they glance at each other and say, 'Is anybody watching you?' This is the sort of thing that a person says when they hear something they cannot bear or which causes them distress such that their color drains from their face and signs of fear and anxiety appear on their countenance. They are afraid that someone will notice them and the secret they have hidden in their heart will be uncovered, so they look to someone who shares this secret with them and to whom they have confessed their inner state, and they ask them whether anyone else has noticed their condition of fear and anxiety.

Therefore, when God says, *they look at one another*, He is referring to the hypocrites. We know this because the pronoun '*them*' in *there are some of them who say* also refers to the hypocrites. Also, when He says, *they look at one another*, this means with a look of one who is fretful, anxious, and afraid of being exposed. Therefore, the phrase, '*Is anybody observing you?*' is not something that they actually utter, but rather the meaning of the glances they exchange with one another. Therefore, the meaning is: 'They look at

one another with the look of one who means to say: "Is anybody observing you?"' And the use of the Arabic preposition '*min*' in '*min aḥad*' ('anybody') emphasizes the meaning of 'anybody' (as in, 'anybody at all').

Then they slip away. God has turned aside their hearts, for they are a people who do not understand: Based on the context, this suggests that they *slip away* from the presence of the Prophet while God has *turned aside their hearts* both from understanding the divine revelations He has sent down and from attaining true faith. This is because they are a people who do not understand the words of truth.

Perhaps the phrase *God has turned aside their hearts* may also be read as an invocation against the hypocrites, with the meaning: 'May God turn aside their hearts!' There are many similar such instances to be found in the Qur'an. And whenever God pronounces an invocation against someone, it must be read as a forewarning of harm that is to come to them.

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ
عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾

(9:128) ***There has certainly come to you a messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is your distress*** **(mā ʿanittum)*****; he has deep concern for you, and is most kind and merciful to the faithful.***

The verb *ʿannittum* from the phrase *mā ʿannittum* (lit. 'what distresses you') is derived from *ʿanat*, meaning destruction and harm. Based on the context, the '*messenger*' referred to by the verse is undoubtedly the Prophet Muḥammad. When it says he is '*from among yourselves*', this appears to mean that he is a human being from the same species as his audience, as there is nothing in the text to suggest that God intended to restrict this meaning to the Arabs or the Quraysh in particular. This is doubly so given that the Prophet's audience and following included people from Rome, Persia, and Ethiopia.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is as follows: 'O people! There has certainly come to you a messenger from among yourselves, one of whose qualities is that he is distressed by your grief and hardship and that he cares for you deeply, whether or not you are yet believers, and he is most kind and compassionate to the faithful among you in particular. Therefore, it is your duty to obey his commands, for he is a messenger who does not proclaim anything save that which God has told him to proclaim. Obeying him is tantamount

to obeying God. You should also become acquainted with him and treat him well, for he is from yourselves, and you should respond to his summons and listen to him as he advises you to do so!'

According to this reading, all of the qualities of the Prophet mentioned in the verse, such as his being 'a messenger', 'from among yourselves', and 'grievous to him is your distress', are intended to encourage people to listen to him and accept his preaching. This is further indicated by the beginning of the subsequent verse, *But if they turn their backs, say, 'God is sufficient for me...'* (9:129).

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ ۖ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١٢٩﴾

(9:129) *But if they turn their backs, say, 'God is sufficient for me. There is no god except Him. In Him I have put my trust and He is the Lord of the Great Throne.'*

In other words, if they turn away from you and refuse to accept your teachings, then say in response: 'God is sufficient for me, there is no god except Him.' This means: 'God is the sufficer, there is no god but Him.'

Therefore, the phrase, *There is no god except Him*, explains why the Prophet says God alone is sufficient for him and why he relies on his Lord instead of relying on external means. God is the sufficer and there is no sufficer except Him. It is also possible that the formula, *There is no god except Him*, is intended purely as a magnification of God's grandeur, as we see in the verse, *And they say, 'God has taken a son.' Immaculate is He!* (2:116).

In Him I have put my trust—The way this is phrased conveys exclusivity (that is, 'in Him alone I have put my trust'), and this phrase expounds the meaning of the earlier phrase, *God is sufficient for me*, showing that this refers to relying on God by adhering to His commands. We have already discussed previously that the term *tawakkul* (relying on God) means that the servant takes his Lord as a trustee to act on his behalf and take control of all of his affairs. In other words, the servant turns away from relying on outward causes and means at his disposal, not least because these means are not sufficient to produce the desired result by themselves. By contrast, *tawakkul* means relying on the one true cause in existence, to which all other causes ultimately return.

This illustrates why God concludes this formula with the coda, *and He is the Lord of the Great Throne*, as it signifies that all authority and sovereignty

belong to Him and that He rules over all things and governs all affairs.

Now, God has only told his Prophet: *say, 'God is sufficient for me'*, rather than 'then place your trust in God' (*fa-tawakkal 'alā Allāh*), in order to guide him to place his trust in his Lord while being mindful of these realities that illuminate the true meaning of *tawakkul*. And also to show him that the correct view is that a person should not pin their hopes on the outward causes they can perceive—even while these may play a role in the attainment of their goals—but should rather use whatever means God has placed at their disposal while placing the trust and pinning their hopes on their Lord to bring about the goal or aim they wish to achieve.

This verse also provides a clear illustration of the Prophet's deep concern for guiding humankind, as God is telling him to place his trust in his Lord in the matter at hand, which, as the previous verses show, is his intense desire to guide people and give them access to abiding and everlasting success.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via his chain of narrators from 'Amr al-Zubayrī from Imām al-Ṣādiq in a lengthy tradition that describes the marks of complete and deficient faith. The narrator asks the Imām, 'I have understood that there can be deficient faith and complete faith (*nuqṣān al-īmān wa tamāmahu*), but what about its increase?' To this, the Imām replied, 'God Almighty says, *Whenever a chapter is sent down, there are some of them who say, "Which of you did it increase in faith?" As for those who have faith, it increases them in faith, and they rejoice. But as for those in whose heart is a sickness, it only adds defilement to their defilement…* (9:124–125), and He says, *We relate to you their account in truth. They were indeed youths who had faith in their Lord, and We had enhanced them in guidance* (18:13). 'Now, if faith were uniform and could not increase or decrease, none of them would have any merit over any other, their blessings would be equally distributed, people would be absolutely equal with one another, and it would be meaningless to talk about any person being superior to another. However, it is with complete faith that the believers enter paradise and through the increase of faith that the believers attain superiority over one another in rank in the eyes of God, while it is with deficient faith that those who fall short enter Hellfire.'

(2) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, it is narrated from Zurāra b. A'yan from Imām al-Bāqir, about the verse, *But as for those in whose heart is a sickness,*

it only adds defilement to their defilement: 'It only adds doubt to their doubt.'

(3) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, concerning the verse, *There has certainly come to you a messenger from among yourselves* (9:128), it is narrated by Abū Naʿīm in *al-Dalāʾil* from Ibn ʿAbbās that the Messenger of God said: 'None of my forefathers were fornicators, and God moved me from pure loins to pure wombs, purified and refined; no lineage ever branched save that I was in the better of the two branches.'

Author's comments: Numerous traditions have been narrated with this meaning from the Prophet by the Companions and others, including ʿAbbās, Anas, Abū Hurayra, Rabīʿa b. al-Ḥārith b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, Ibn ʿUmar, Ibn ʿAbbās, ʿAlī, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Bāqir, Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq, and others still.

(4) In the same source, Ibn al-Ḍurays in *Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān*, Ibn al-Anbārī in *al-Maṣāḥif*, and Ibn Mardawayh narrate from al-Ḥasan that Ubayy b. Kaʿb used to say: 'The last part of the Qurʾan to be sent down from the heavens by God were the two verses that begin: *There has certainly come to you a messenger from among yourselves....*'

Author's comments: This tradition is also narrated via another chain from Ubayy b. Kaʿb, although it is in conflict with some of the other narrations on this topic, and also with some of the traditions we have already discussed relating to the verse, *And beware of a day in which you will be brought back to God* (2:281), which claim that this was the final verse of the Qurʾan to be sent down.

Moreover, the wording of the two verses does not lend much support to the idea that they are the last parts of the Qurʾan to be revealed, unless we read them as references to certain events from the last days of his life, such as the incident of the pen and the ink.

(5) In the same source, Ibn Isḥāq, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and Ibn Abī Dāwūd narrate from ʿAbbād b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr: 'al-Ḥārith b. Khuzayma came with these two verses from the end of Sūrah al-Tawba to ʿUmar when he was gathering the verses of the Qurʾan: *There has certainly come to you a messenger from among yourselves... and He is the Lord of the Great Throne.* ʿUmar said: 'Who else do you have that recalls these two verses?'

Al-Ḥārith replied, 'I do not know, I swear by God that I heard these from the Messenger of God and understood them and preserved them.'